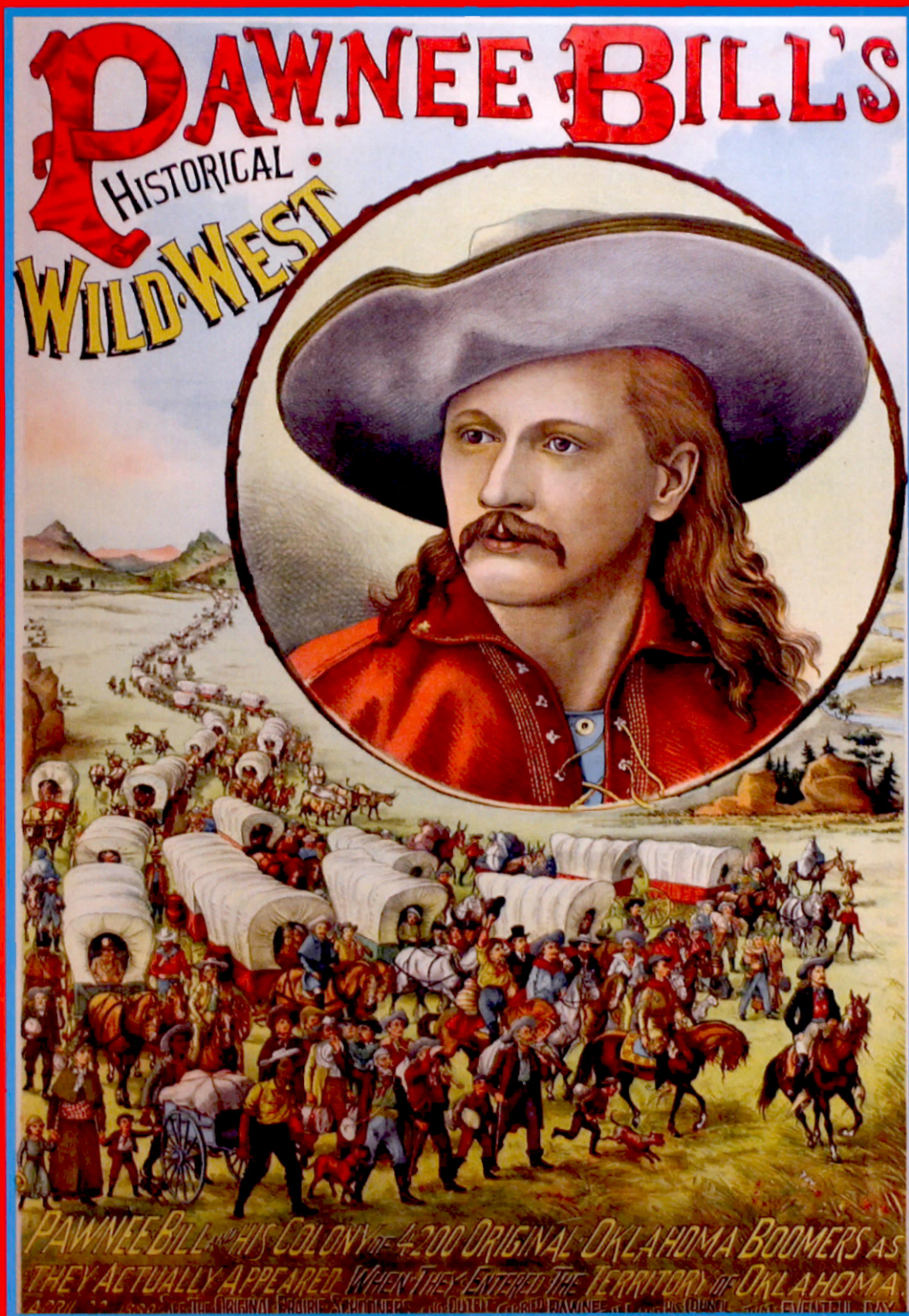


# BANDWAGON

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2005



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## THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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**Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor**

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### THE FRONT COVER

The cover illustration is a lithograph used by Pawnee Bill's Wild West for season of 1891. Ken Harck collection.

### THE BACK COVER

This Pawnee Bill lithograph was issued in 1906. It was printed by the Russell-Morgan Company. Ken Harck collection.

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# The Grand Parade of PAWNEE BILL'S WILD WEST

By Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

## Introduction

*The daily street parade was the final element in a weeks-long publicity campaign that foretold of the coming of the Pawnee Bill's Wild West. Many local residents used the freely observed procession as the deciding factor in whether to buy tickets to the performance.*

*If the parade was good, the reasoning went, so was the show. In this area, Lillie excelled. His street parades were without doubt the finest ever staged by a wild west organization in his own time, eclipsing those of the better known Buffalo Bill's Wild West and his other contemporaries. Recognizing the value of the display, Lillie was the only wild west proprietor to arrange for the construction of an entirely new fleet of parade wagons. He was also the first wild west proprietor to acquire a steam calliope, a tableau and an organ wagon. His aggregation had the first featured "Far East" ethnological contingent and was also the first "wild west" to utilize Asiatic elephants and camels. Though Lillie has forever stood in the shadow of William F. Cody, his parade innovations are just one of several achievements that should cause broader appreciation of him.*

## The Beginning of the Grand Parade

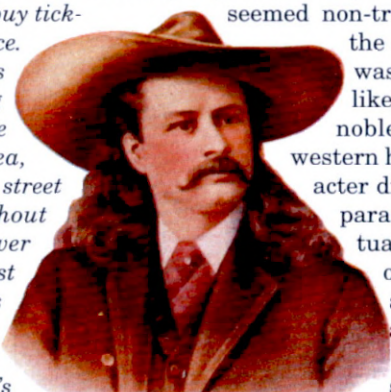
We suspect that Lillie followed the Cody show's early efforts in developing his street demonstration, having been a participant in Cody operations in 1883 and 1884. The parade was of the same form and substance.

Cody's included just a single bandwagon before 1895. The majority of the march was comprised of the personnel and animals that staged the performance. It's what the public initially expected to see at a wild west parade. Anything else would have seemed non-traditional and out of the ordinary. After all, it wasn't a show, as Cody liked to point out, but a nobler re-enactment of western history. It had a character different than a circus parade, which was punctuated by parade wagons and both caged and walking exotic animals.

Although his own show commenced operations in the fall of 1887, nothing is known of Pawnee Bill's efforts to stage a parade prior to 1893. The wagon inventory in his 1893 route book indicates that about twenty-one vehicles were loaded on the show's

flat cars. Dedicated procession wagons that can be identified were limited to a \$1,800 bandwagon and a barouche, a specific style of carriage. They were augmented in the daily march by performance properties, such as the two prairie schooners, a Concord stagecoach, rifle cannons on carriages, an ox cart and four racing chariots, and possibly the \$1,200 ticket wagon. Decorated ticket wagons were pressed into parade duty by a number of shows from the 1880s to the 1910s. The cannon were fired on the show grounds immediately before the advertised 10:00 AM parade start, similar to the 13-gun

Ernest Haag was so proud of the former Pawnee Bill parade vehicles he purchased that he had special paper created to advertise them. What appears to be brown is actually the lithographic process representation of the extensive applied gold leaf. Tom Parkinson collection, Circus World Museum.



salute that Barnum had advocated for his Centennial show tour of 1876.

Pawnee Bill couriers of the period stated that all of the features of the wild west rolled before the eyes of the local population, indicating that the procession included most of the performing stock and personnel, including the two bands. The Mexican group rode the bandwagon and the American Indian ensemble was on horseback.<sup>1</sup>

The date inscribed on the earliest known Pawnee Bill parade photograph is given as the autumn of 1894, when the show was on tour in Europe. Taken at Salisbury, North Carolina, the actual date of the exposure is likely October 7, 1898.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of the date, it shows a box body tableau with simulated organ pipe decorations on the sides and on the skyboards. In the photograph, the wagon is carrying the Mexican band, a musical feature uniquely associated with Lillie's operation. On the side visible there is a central carving of a mounted male rider, either a plainsman or a Mexican, dispatching a buffalo with a spear. From later documentation, we know that the other side carried a similar, but different carving, that of a male American Indian slaying another buffalo.

It was the first of at least four Pawnee Bill wagons that carried different carvings on their two sides, an unusual practice in show wagon annals where symmetry and balance typically prevailed. Exactly when and where the tableau originated has not been determined. Perhaps it once carried a mechanical organ for a circus years before being acquired by Pawnee Bill. It is likely to have been the \$1,800 bandwagon listed in 1893. If the price was accurate, it was an expensive investment.

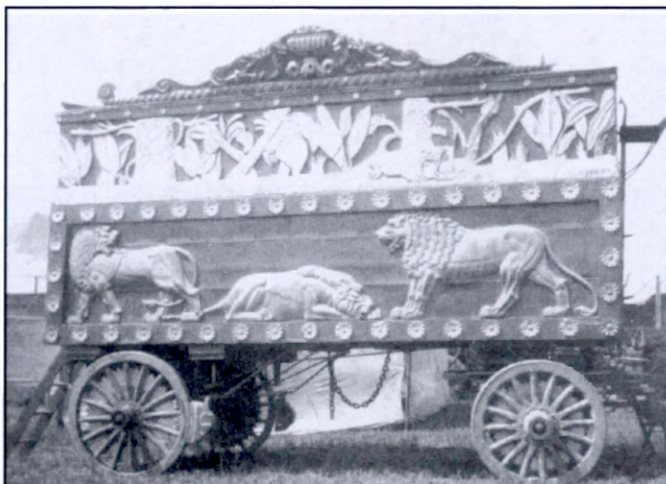
The first known parade order for the show was found



The Mexican band, a unique feature with Pawnee Bill's outfit, rode the lead bandwagon in his parades. This view is probably from 1898. Joseph T. Bradbury collection.

in an undated issue of the 1898 *Decatur (Illinois) Review*. It documented the following units in the march: young lady on horseback blowing bugle; mounted United States and Cuban soldiers with flags; Chinese party in a carriage; bandwagon with cowboy [Mexican?] band on top; Pawnee Bill on horse

Tableau with three Babylonian lions. One of the earlier tableaux with Pawnee Bill's was this box wagon. Two male lions were fighting over a lioness in the side panel. The low sided tableau was raised to full height by 1904, with jungle and amphibian carvings, as well as a fancy skyboard. Harry Bock photograph.



back; mounted riders, including ladies, Arabs and American Indians; [black jubilee?] singers on a tallyho; cowboys and Mexicans on horseback; broncho ponies; stagecoach with band on top and four female American Indians and a baby inside; drove of cattle; two companies of artillery; and a weathered prairie schooner. Other than the lead bandwagon, it does not appear that the show possessed any other circus-type parade wagons at this time. Most

everything else would also have been seen in the arena presentation later in the day.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the bandwagon with organ pipe decorations, five other parade wagons might be associated with the Lillie show prior to 1903. The pre-turn of the century connection comes from the identifications and dates provided by show attaché Harry V. Bock (1865-1949), who made nearly 200 exposures of the Pawnee Bill outfit sometime between 1903-1905. He specifically identified three vehicles as pre-1903 parade assets. These three, and a fourth he didn't photograph, share certain hardware peculiarities, namely a foot brake with a pivot shaft located at the front base of the body and a full width driver footboard. All four also share a shortness of length. A fifth wagon, a low profile tableau, was expanded by 1905 into a large box tableau. The mid-1890s dates ascribed to the vehicles by Bock are suspect because they do not appear in the 1898 parade account just referenced. Presumably they date back no further than 1899, and two may date no earlier than 1904.

The first of these was called the number three bandwagon by Bock, a designation that may have been pertinent only when he was with the show. He fixed dates for it from 1896 to 1903. It was



The first Pawnee Bill calliope was this plain Ohlsen wagon, probably shown here on the Norris & Rowe circus about 1908. Circus World Museum.

a truly unusual vehicle, with front and back additions to the body that gave it an ungainly, top-heavy look. Short and stubby, it was also wide, with space for four men to sit abreast in the driver's seat area. Four white Percherons were adequate to pull it. In something of a Pawnee Bill show trademark, each side of the wagon bore a different central carving, one side featuring a mounted American Indian, the other a mounted rider of western or Mexican heritage. The cantilevered pieces were each covered in fine carvings that do not appear to be related to the western-themed decorations that filled the sides. In 1901 it carried the Mexican band and in the era of 1905-1906 it carried the sideshow band. It was assigned the number 20.

The wagon that Bock identified as the side show bandwagon was assigned the number 35 about 1904. It featured a large carved elliptical frame on each side, small shell-carved skyboards and not much other decoration. Four white Percherons hauled it in the street procession. Bock associated it with Pawnee Bill from 1896 to 1903. It was as compact as the number three bandwagon.

The third wagon of the trio was one Bock termed the concert talent wagon, meaning that the people who put on the after show in the arena rode the wagon in parade. The predominant riders appear to have been black women. They may have compromised the jubilee singers' musical organization. It, too, had an oval frame on the side and also had an unusual appearance. An extension

was added to the rear of the wagon to increase seating capacity, giving it a very unique shape. Bock placed it on the show from 1899 to 1903. It was assigned the number 40 and was pulled by a team of six white Percherons.

A fourth wagon that might have been part of the pre-1900 outfit later bore the number 38 when it was photographed about 1905. It was a simple box tableau. The sides were covered with painted American Indian scenes and skyboards were embellished with painted scrolls. It then carried the American Indian band. The appearance of the plains people blowing brass horns must have been a very unusual looking presentation.

The second, major tableau of the show was identified as the chandelier wagon by Bock. In its earliest form it was a low-bodied wagon, half the height of a regular box body tableau. It shows as such in parade photographs taken at Waverly, Iowa and Chillicothe, Ohio before 1903.<sup>4</sup> The principal decorations were three lions, of somewhat Babylonian styling, on each side, surrounded by a plain rectangular shaped molding on which were affixed a multitude of

carved flowers shaped like simple daisies. The added upper half was embellished with jungle-like carvings, an amphibian-like creature being the only life represented. Pulled by six white Percherons in the usual metal-trimmed harness, the tableau has not been traced after use on the Pawnee Bill show. It may be significant that the retrofitted central skyboard carving, incorporating a representation of a fluted urn, is identical with that on the skyboard of Barnum & London Tableau Cage #68 of 1883. It suggests either a common design inspiration or possibly a shared carving origin.

Lillie toured with the Sells Bros. Circus in 1887 and that exposure to circus elements had a significant impact on his subsequent show management. The steam calliope, the traditional and ritualistic final unit of the American circus parade since 1872, thereby received a place in the Pawnee Bill's Wild West cavalcade. Lillie's initial calliope was purchased in Cincinnati in late 1898, making his the first ever with a wild west operation. His 1898 steamer was reportedly a 32-whistle machine; perhaps the first of that particular size as show releases termed it the largest ever built. It wasn't the biggest, but larger instruments of 34 and more whistles were largely

Tableau #20 with Mexican band. This wide but short tableau with different central carvings on the two sides paraded down the streets of Menomonee, Wisconsin on June 22, 1901. Circus World Museum.



unknown to the general public. Thomas J. Nichol (1857-1931), the reigning Cincinnati steam calliope builder, no doubt fabricated and assembled the whistles, manifold and keyboard comprising the playing unit.<sup>5</sup> Twenty and twenty-four whistle instruments had been the rule in prior years, the limitation on size perhaps the result of boiler capacity, which in turn was limited by wagon dimensions and capacity.

The party from which show manager O. J. Krause purchased the calliope, identified as one Robert K. Hynicky, may be the same person as Reed K. Hynicka, who was reportedly involved with the 1897 Hummel, Hamilton & Sells circus. The author believes the actual identity of the seller, the same person whose name was adulterated in both accounts above, to have been Rudolph "Rud" Keller Hynicka (1859-1927). Best known as the successor to George B. Cox (1854?-1916) in controlling Cincinnati's Republican political machine, Hynicka was also involved with the operation of Cincinnati's Coney Island amusement park beginning about 1915.<sup>6</sup>

The 1897 Hummel, Hamilton & Sells show became the John F. Hummel Circus in 1898, the assets of which, including a steam calliope, were offered for sale in Cincinnati only four weeks before the Pawnee Bill purchase announcement. Logic suggests that the Hummel and Lillie calliopes are one and the same, but photographic confirmation is lacking at this time. The Hummel machine, listed for \$400, was the most valuable asset of the 11-car circus.<sup>7</sup> The Hummel steamer may have originated on the Great Wallace Shows in 1884, or the Miles Orton circus of 1883, and then went to Sells & Rentfrow Shows from 1891 to 1894, which became the New Great Syndicate Shows 1895-1896 and then the Hummel-titled organizations of 1897 and 1898. It is likely to have served with Pawnee Bill through 1904 and subsequently sold off for duty with Norris & Rowe 1905-1909 and finally Al G. Barnes



The only pony-sized wagon that has been traced after service on Lillie's show is the little tableau that originally carried his portrait. It's shown here on Downie & Wheeler in 1912. Pfening Archives.

into the 1910s. Barnes extensively rebuilt the wagon and by 1924 it was no longer recognizable.

There was an expansion of the show's parade by the turn of the century. A reviewer for the May 29, 1901 Kenosha (Wisconsin) *Evening News* wrote that it provided a first class parade, there being three bands in the assembly, along with typical wild west parade elements. At least one more bandwagon had been added. Perhaps it was the tableau with the Babylonian-styled lions on the side.

As late as 1902, the only wagon accurately depicted in Pawnee Bill advertising was the bandwagon of circa 1893 vintage. One set of photographs dateable as 1901 indicates that a reduced scale stagecoach was among the special units in the parade. In 1903, the offerings for children and adults alike would be expanded significantly.

#### Building a Truly Grand Parade

Pawnee Bill's Wild West reached a plateau by the turn of the century. It did not grow in size beyond 25 cars, perhaps to keep it moving together in one section. It was a

manageable operation and Lillie had an apparent practice of simply enhancing it, plowing back into the outfit large amounts of money, seemingly trying to make it the finest show possible for his patrons. His upgrading of the parade to make a highly favorable impression on local residents may have been his single biggest investment, following the purchase of a train of railroad cars. Significantly,

his major investment in a street parade occurred on the eve of the departure of his greatest competitor, Buffalo Bill's Wild West, on an extended tour of Europe. America was essentially left open to him to make his own mark as a wild west impresario.

From 1903 to 1905, Lillie arranged for the construction of: the second-most costly band wagon ever built; a huge portable organ wagon, the first and only with a wild west; one extraordinarily fine tableau wagon; two additional tableaux of elegance; and the second steam calliope in wild west annals. These six vehicles provided the principal features of Lillie's procession, augmented by a dozen and a half lesser vehicles and the ethnological groupings and exotic animals which fulfilled the show's formal title, Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West and Great Far East.

There is nothing inherently differ-

Tableau #38 was the simplest of the four related tableaux with simply painted sides. The attraction was the American Indian band on top. J. W. Beggs photograph.





Even the pony team pulling this little Pawnee Bill tableau had fancy parade harness. Glasier photo, Circus Museum, John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art.

ent between wild west parade wagons and conventional circus parade vehicles. The same firms, designers and artisans, who employed the identical techniques for making circus parade wagons, made them. Lillie did not make one, single major expenditure for his parade equipment, but discretely placed a number of orders over a three-year period. His first, for delivery in 1903, was with the Sebastian Wagon Company and Samuel Robb (1851-1928) of New York. It was for the all-important first or lead band wagon and one tableau, two pieces that by their magnificence would immediately raise the perceived quality of his show. Simultaneously, Sebastian and Robb were executing an unprecedented \$44,200 parade wagon order for the Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth that brought them great acclaim. Sebastian's circus work began in the 1870s, that of Robb in the early 1880s, if not before.

The mechanical organ wagon Lillie acquired for 1904 was a collaboration of two Philadelphia firms, wagon builder Fulton & Walker and carousel manufacturer Gustav A. Dentzel. Circus work rolled out of the doors of Fulton & Walker as far back as 1867. Dentzel supplied the carved wagon ornamentation and the mechanical organ for the interior.<sup>8</sup> Two fine tableaus came from the same Philadelphia collaboration the next year. The steam calliope was also ordered for 1905 from Sullivan & Eagle of Peru, Indiana, a firm credited with making at least six circus

and two wild west steamers between circa 1899 and 1910. Their circus commissions are thought to have commenced in 1884.

Surprisingly, western topics or themes were seldom incorporated into wild west parade wagon decorations. They were ornamented with the same acanthus type scrollwork and other romantic revival inspired woodcarvings that typified circus work of the period. Pawnee Bill did have two parade vehicles that embodied western figures, one a stubby and unusually configured bandwagon, and the other a tableau, both of which predated 1903. In the case of his 1903-1905 wagons, inspirations came from famous events in American history and the secondary portion of the show title, the Great Far East.

The finest vehicle in the Pawnee Bill line up was the "Band Wagon," as it was stated on the Sebastian invoice. It was a truly magnificent piece of commercial art measuring 21 feet-8 inches long by 12 feet-6 inches high and weighing in at over five tons.<sup>9</sup> In an arrangement quite unusual for a show wagon, each side, except for the featured carving, was entirely symmetrical about the midpoint of the wagon, with even the front and rear wheel diameters being identical to perpetuate the visual balance. Just as unusual, each side featured a different, asymmetrical bas-relief scene, unlike most parade wagons that usually

bore the same symmetrical decorative design on both sides. The side-to-side dissimilarity may have been a Pawnee Bill trademark; he had at least three other parade wagons that were so conceived. If one mentally erased the wheels and undergears, the bandwagon sides looked more like pieces of fine sculptural work suited more for an art gallery than application to a showman's parade wagon.

From the April 23, 1903 invoice Sebastian sent to Lillie, it is known that the massive bandwagon cost over \$4,000. The equivalent cost today a bit less than a half-million dollars. It was just slightly less costly than the \$4,200, which James A. Bailey paid the same year for the famous "Two Hemispheres" bandwagon. The difference was actually less than \$200, as the invoice includes an additional \$120 for "Carving the background and gilding same." The resulting \$80 or \$140.00 differential depends on whether the surcharge applied to only one or both wagons of the Pawnee Bill order to Sebastian. It was the second most costly circus parade wagon for which actual documentation of the price exists. The vehicle was fitted with screw brakes, worked from a brake wheel. Turning of the wheel caused the stem to rise in its holder because of the screw threads between them.

Three arch tableau. Children along the sides of the streets could see themselves in the three mirrors that decorated this otherwise simple tableau. Harry Bock photograph.





The Japan tableau. The high quality of the carvings applied to the Japanese wagon was truly exceptional, far better than typical circus wagons. Harry Bock photograph.

The rising stem pulled a chain that applied the brakes to the rear wheels. This provided very positive and powerful braking action, the best available. One body and two lead poles were furnished, along with three sets of lead bars, or eveners, adequate to hitch up a six-horse team. It came with a drag shoe and chain for downhill movements and the interior was outfitted with lockers to store show properties.

Lillie recognized the significant status of his Sebastian wagon order in the circus business. In a letter written a few years later when he was trying to sell the band wagon, Lillie noted "This band wagon is as fine as anybody's wagon and cost exactly the same price as the one ordered the same year by the Barnum show and is today the finest wagon in show business." When he made that statement in 1907, the Barnum & Bailey "Two Hemispheres" was in storage, as it had been for the two previous seasons. The fact that his bandwagon could also haul show properties may have given it a slight value advantage over the Two Hemispheres, which did not carry cargo.<sup>10</sup>

An unusual construction feature of the Lillie bandwagon was the stage coach-like driver's seat construction that extended from the front of the wagon. Similar designs can be found on some 19th century parade wagons. From this perch the driver held

the reins over the ten dun horses of an unknown breed that drew the wagon. It was not an arrangement that found particular favor with the drivers, altering the positioning of the reins that led to the wheel horses. The entire team was dressed in fancy harness trappings and fitted with metal trimmings, something of a standard on Pawnee Bill's show.

The outside of the wagon body was decorated with carvings done in white pine. In a highly unusual, undoubtedly unique manner, the entire exterior of the body was gilded, with the exception of four U. S. flag representations, one on each corner, which were done in red, white and blue. To preserve the fragile gilded surface of the masterpiece, a Canton flannel cover was supplied with the wagon. Canton flannel is defined in *Fairchild's Dictionary of Textiles* as "A carded cotton fabric woven with a four-harness warp face twill with heavy, soft, filling yarn and a medium count warp. A long nap is raised on the back." One deduces that the lining provided a "soft and fluffy" interior for the sewn wagon covers that would otherwise have abraded the molecule-thick gold leaf.<sup>11</sup>

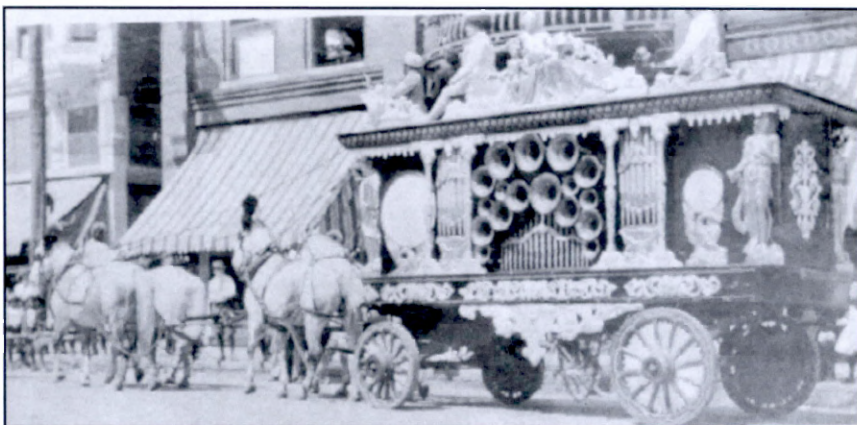
Though reference to the gilded body was read by historians who had access to the Sebastian invoice for some three to four decades, it has only been with the publication of the extraordinary set of Bock photographs of the Pawnee Bill outfit that this all-encompassing gilding has been appreciated.<sup>12</sup> The actual origin of the gilding, taken from Lillie's own words, was also rediscovered after residing in a Circus World Museum file for nearly three

decades. In a 1962 letter, noted circus miniature builder Jean LeRoy quoted from a letter dated May 2, 1938 that he had received from Lillie. In it Lillie stated, "The band wagon was solid gold leaf. Sebastin (sic) and Co[.] made this in New York at a contract price of \$5,000. When they completed it--that is the scroll work [,] they sent for me before the background was put in and when I saw it, there was so much gold leaf on it that I said to the manager I said--'what would you charge to put all the background in gold leaf' [?] [H]e counted it up and said about \$400. The figures were not in solid colors--all gold leaf in fact the entire body was gold leaf." Lillie indicated that only light materials, such as parade wardrobe, were carried in the bandwagon because of its already great weight. He said it took six horses to move it even when it was empty. "We worked 10 dun horses with white manes and tails and the harness was full of brass trimmings. It was beautiful, in fact, it was one of the most gorgeous units I ever saw in anybody's parade."<sup>13</sup> In an era of hotly debated gold and silver standards, the bandwagon must have looked like a golden idol rolling down the street. Resplendent and brilliant in the sun would have been an apt description by the show's press agent.

The large bas-relief panels that dominated the two sides of the bandwagon were an accepted part of popular American history at the time of the wagon's construction. They are now considered politically incorrect by some and in need of accompanying interpretation. The left side recorded a scene wherein the female American Indian Pocahontas "saved" English Capt. John Smith, a legendary event known only from Smith's own hand. A number of such representations exist and it has not been determined which one Robb and his carvers utilized as their inspiration. For the right side of the wagon, the designer presented "Columbus discovering America," or at least placing his flag at the island of Guanahani, West Indies on October 12, 1492. This panel was inspired by the John Vanderlyn (1775-1852) painting that hangs in the rotunda of the U. S. Capitol in Washington, D. C. It was placed there in 1847.<sup>14</sup>

The second Sebastian vehicle, a large tableau, was also described in the 1903 Sebastian invoice. Called the "Japanese Wagon," it was a finely carved vehicle also fitted with screw brakes and came with one body and one lead pole, and two sets of lead bars. A drag shoe and chain were included, as was a Canton flannel cover. The outside of the body was covered with carvings, paint and gilding. It cost \$3,150, 50% more than the 22-foot long Spain Tableau furnished to the Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. Enormous Shows United in 1902 by George Schmidt, the Cincinnati wagon builder. It also substantially exceeded the \$1,900 cost of the Germany and Russia Tableaus, which Albert Bode built for the Ringlings in 1903. Simply put, it was an extraordinarily costly tableau wagon exemplifying the finest American craftsmanship that money could buy. The Japanese theme, anticipating the Far East addition to the Pawnee Bill title, was reflected in the carvings, which included several dragons of exceptional quality, a Japanese couple in the center of each side and two additional figures on the back door, all in heavy and artistically executed bas relief. A throne chair was provided on the roof, flanked by lower carved seats occupied by attendants in back and the driver's assistants in front. Although the dragons were asymmetrical, the front and rear wheels were of the same diameter to give visual balance, like the bandwagon. Outside sunburst decorations were applied to the wheels on both the bandwagon and the tableau. Six white Percherons in fancy metal-encrusted trappings were assigned to the wagon for parade purposes.

The Lillie order was placed with Sebastian and Robb rather late in 1902. The invoice notes a cash payment of \$2,000 made on December 4, 1902, followed by \$1,650 on December 29. Two additional payments of unknown amounts were made on April 21 and 23, 1903, no doubt reflecting completion of the order. Lillie's order was placed about a month before the Sebastian and Robb crews were engaged to fabricate the unprecedented thirteen parade wagons for Barnum & Bailey. Surely there had been talk of the



pending Barnum & Bailey order and Lillie was likely induced to book his work in order to assure completion by the spring. It is thought that the real time crunch came in the carving work, and not that of the wagon maker.

The two vehicles for Pawnee Bill and thirteen wagons for Barnum & Bailey stretched Samuel Robb's carving capacity to the limit. Barnum show publicity later stated that Robb had twenty-five artisans laboring on the project for more than an entire year. Some parts, notably the national seals on the Barnum & Bailey bandwagon, were contracted out to the Newark, New Jersey shop of the Spanjer Bros. Company. He also hired several carvers better known for their carousel figure endeavors. Among these were the highly regarded Daniel C. Muller (1872-1952) and his brother, Alfred F. Muller. Muller's daybook was once accessible to the late carousel doyenne Frederick Fried who abstracted a note from it about work for the Pawnee Bill order. Among the surviving papers of Daniel Muller is a letter from Lillie dated January 6, 1902 wherein he asked Muller to call on him at 605 Sansom Street, the address of his Philadelphia office. Muller's 1903 ledger carries two entries of \$100.00 each from Lillie for wagon carvings, one on May 13 and another backdated to April 20. Based on the records, Fried concluded that Muller had made the carvings for the Japanese Wagon. Photographs of the carvings for the Band Wagon and Japanese Wagon while in the Robb workspace at the Sebastian plant were published in Fried's book, *Artists in Wood*. Fried also identified to the author another carousel carver,

The organ wagon received favored treatment in media materials, suggesting that either Lillie or one of his agents was truly fond of it. Albert Conover collection.

one of the Robb shop photographs. Robb hired accomplished carvers that he knew he could rely upon for considerable bench output.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond the magnificent bandwagon and tableau, the biggest feature added for 1903 was a juvenile wild west parade section. Always quick to recognize the success of others, Lillie added the children's attraction in response to the popularity of the diminutive dog and pony shows. The Ringling and Wallace circuses had done likewise a few seasons before Lillie did so. Numerous small, child-sized wagons, constituted this section. There were five diminutive tableaus decorated with a mixture of carved ornamentation, mirrors, and Lillie's portrait. Augmenting the group was the miniature stagecoach that had been with the show as early as 1901. The six bore no resemblance to one another, suggesting different makers and sources for each one. One had a roof styled along the line of the cottage cages associated with the John Robinson circus. Notes by Harry Bock claim that it was built at the show's Litchfield, Illinois quarters during the winter of 1900-1901. The addition of the other child-scale vehicles may have been the result of the bad luck encountered by the Sipe Dog and Pony Show, organized by George W. Sipe (?-1932) of Kokomo, Indiana in 1895. The Sipe outfit was sold at auction on November 19, 1902 and among the attendees of the sale was Pawnee Bill. Just before it was

conducted, circus man J. Augustus Jones of Warren, Pennsylvania, visited Lillie in Pittsburgh and it was reported that they would attend the sale in Kokomo, Indiana together. The chattel of the Sipe outfit included forty-five miniature cages, chariots and parade wagons, some of which were likely those that appeared in Pawnee Bill's expanded 1903 march.<sup>16</sup> Only one of the small wagons has been traced subsequent to service on the wild west. The finest of them, which bore Lillie's portrait in a center oval, was later with E. G. Smith's Colossal Shows of 1907 and then in 1912 on the Downie & Wheeler Shows.<sup>17</sup> Brock's notes indicate that it was also made at the show's Litchfield quarters during the winter of 1900-1901, but the quality of the manufacture suggest that professional craftsmen had a hand in the construction.

The organ wagon and two lesser tableaux came from Philadelphia builders for the 1904 tour. It is very likely that Lillie decided that he could obtain wagons from other builders without paying the premium for New York craftsmanship as he had in 1903. Like the New York collaboration, it is thought that Fulton & Walker made the wagon undercarriages and bodies that were then ornamented with carvings from Gustav Dentzel's suburban German-town carving shop. Fulton & Walker had fabricated cages for the J. E.

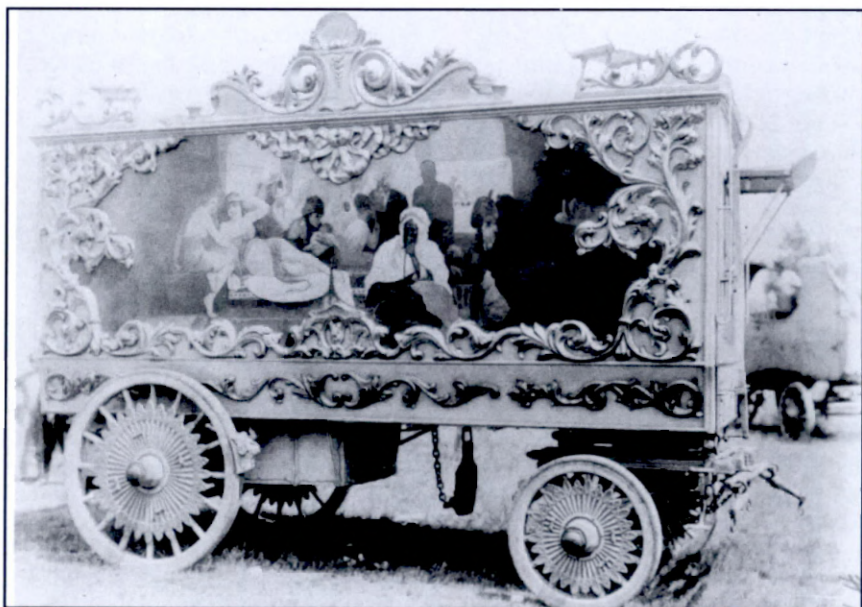
Warner and Adam Forepaugh circuses. In 1902 they executed a "rush" baggage wagon order for Forepaugh-Sells, their only known circus work in proximity to the Pawnee Bill order.<sup>18</sup> Gustav A. Dentzel (1848-1909) came to the United States from Germany in 1867 and within the decade commenced a family carousel building and operating business which would continue until the death of his son, William H. Dentzel (1876?-1928). The firm was best known for building finely crafted park carousels and seldom, if ever, dealt with the traveling folk, there being no known examples of a portable Dentzel carousel. The 1904 and 1905 Lillie work may have been their single encounter with the circus world. In a later letter, Lillie revealed that he had paid over \$3,000 for the pair of tableaux. That made them as expensive as two of the bigger tableaux, titled Great Britain and United States, built by Bode for the Ringlings in 1903. They were much more costly than typical tableau wagons made by the Moellers, Sullivan & Eagle and other circus wagon builders. Examination of carving details reveals that they were more finely finished than typical circus wagon decorations.

The White tableau was originally red, but in later service on the Corporation's John Robinson unit it was white or light yellow. Pfening Archives.

The mechanical organ wagon must have been Lillie's pride as it was the wagon most frequently referenced in show advertising. It was special, being the first organ wagon built new for a wild west and one of the last for a traveling show of any type. Though the organ was mechanical, an electrical motor or system must have powered the instrument as it was referred to as the "Ten Thousand Dollar Electric Organ" in show publicity. The advertised cost of the unit was a two to three-fold exaggeration. Lillie later stated that he paid \$3800 cash for the organ masterpiece.<sup>19</sup> The finely crafted central skyboard carvings may have been influenced by the carved allegory termed the "Schuylkill Freed" that was created by William Rush (1756-1833) about 1828 for the Fairmont Water Works.<sup>20</sup>

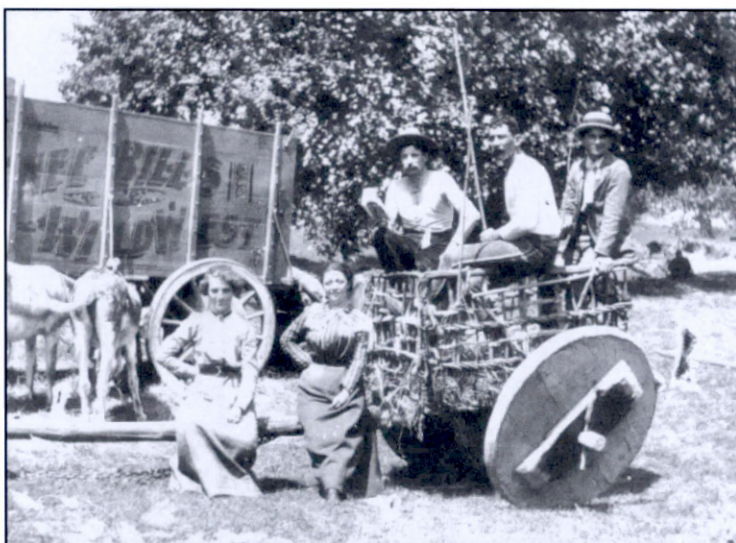
Dentzel, who furnished a variety of different American, French and German band organs for their carousel installations, presumably provided the instrument for the Lillie wagon. No description of the instrument or its capabilities has been discovered. More than likely it was a large, loudly voiced military-styled band organ typical of the era, one that featured brass trombones, trumpets, clarinets and piccolos, accompanied by drums, a cymbal and possibly chimes. It has not been determined if the brass work displayed on the two sides were functional or not. The contra-tuba size resonators are the largest ever seen on any mechanical or straight organ, suggesting that they were for display only and not functional. For many years it was unknown if pipes were only on the left side of the vehicle. A Baker-Lockwood Company photograph liberated from obscurity by Orin Copple King finally eliminated the uncertainty. Both sides had the same organ-like facades. To provide a gentler ride for the sensitive organ, the wagon wheels had solid rubber tires, like those fitted to early industrial trucks. The sunburst panels on the wheels have a design and inside position that duplicate those found on the Oriental Tableau, suggesting a common manufacturer.

When the two tableaux were sold a few years later, they were identified



as the Oriental and White Tableaus. Based upon their decorative designs and coloration, it is believed that these were their original names. Both have a great similarity in design and carving execution, suggesting that the same group of Philadelphia artisans fabricated them. The Oriental Tableau was the larger of the two, scaling of surviving carvings and period photography indicating a sixteen-foot length. The White Tableau was about two feet shorter, but together they nicely filled one-half of a sixty-foot flat car, the size then commonly in use. The Oriental Tableau had an ungainly look, the rear axle being set too far forward. Each of the tableaus was fitted with panel sunbursts that were originally affixed behind the spokes. This must have proven somewhat unsatisfactory, as within a few years those of the White Tableau were relocated to the outside face of the spokes, their normal position. The decorative motifs of both wagons fulfilled the Great Far East subtitle of the Pawnee Bill outfit, offering elements representing the exotic eastern cultures.

The decorative concept for both tableaus was to surround scenic paintings with an abundance of finely crafted scrolls. The Oriental Tableau carvings incorporated a centrally positioned urn or jardinière, a decorative element, which have caused some to refer to it later as the Jardiner (sic) Tableau. Pulling at the lower scrolls in interminable battles were two winged cupids, or putti, between which a carved ram's head was positioned. The skyboard carvings were discontinuous, a pierce carved scroll at each end with a central mask from whose mouth an unrolled parchment scroll appeared to be descending. The scenic paintings on the right side depicted a Middle Eastern city scene, perhaps a market. Towards the front was another city scene, men seated and standing before a columned structure. The original left side paintings



An extreme contrast to finely crafted parade wagons were the ethnological entries, like this Filipino ox cart. May Lillie is seated on the tongue on right. Pfening Archives.

have not been discovered, but in later years a seated harem girl filled the front area with an antlered creature filling the rear panel. The scenic paintings appear to have been well cared for and durable, and the originals may have lasted for a decade or more. In the terminology of the time, the Middle Eastern scenes must have been considered "oriental," and thereby the wagon's name was derived.

The White Tableau gained its name from the predominant color of the body. Fitted with carved scrolls of a high quality, the White Tableau had only one scene on each side. The right depicted some type of Arabian assembly, with two reclining and partially nude harem girls and several male figures smoking the hookah and observing them. The identity of the left side paintings has not been determined. By 1905 the wagon body was painted a dark color but the scenic paintings were apparently left intact. The White Tableau had a possum, or partial dropped floor built into the rear of the wagon, enabling it to perhaps serve as a ticket wagon or commissary, the dropped bottom providing internal head or legroom for the occupant.

The addition of the Great Far East subtitle to Pawnee Bill's Wild West in 1904 brought with it a need to flesh out the addition in the parade.

Among the ethnic items added in the march were a large Filipino-style ox cart drawn by a bullock. The simplicity and crudeness of the cart was a stark contrast to the finely executed and gilded wagons from New York and Philadelphia.

In a 1907 letter to Lancaster, Missouri horse trader and circus broker William P. Hall (1864-1932), Lillie disclosed that he had a new calliope built by Sullivan & Eagle in

1905 at a cost of \$1,900. Theodore J. Sullivan (1840-1920) and Henry A. Eagle (1850-1938) formed their enterprise in 1879. The circus connections of that Peru, Indiana, wagon builder originated with hometown showman Benjamin E. Wallace (1848-1921). They fabricated a twin to the Wallace steam calliope for the Campbell brothers in 1902. Six more steamers followed, including a pair for Gentry Bros. Shows in 1902, one for the short-lived Luella Forepaugh-Fish Wild West of 1903, a plain wagon for the Great Floto Shows in 1904 and a John H. Sparks Shows whistler by 1910. The fanciest one they ever made was built for Pawnee Bill in 1905. Each of these wagons was fitted with a split roof, an arrangement which dated back to the calliopes of the mid-1870s. The front offered some weather protection to the player, the rear for the fireman. Most of them had heavy carved scrollwork on the front corners, a centrally located medallion encircling a figure on the side and thinly carved scrolls abounding in the open areas. The Pawnee Bill wagon was the only one to have a full-bodied carving of a horse on the side, perhaps a tribute to the importance of the equine to the wild west.

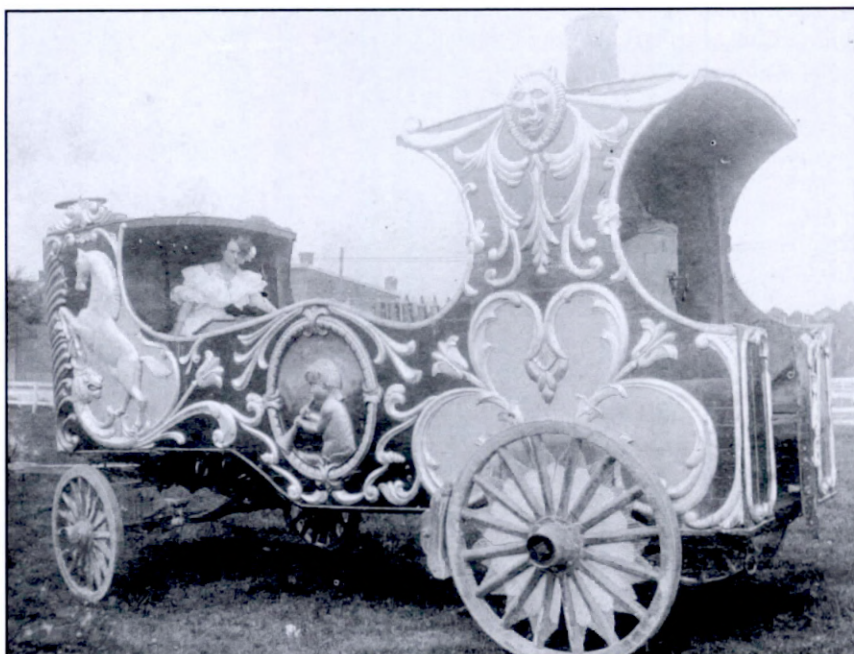
Small, 20 whistle Nichol instruments were in the stubby Gentry wagons. The longer Forepaugh-Fish, Floto and Pawnee Bill wagons all had the increasingly common 32 whistle devices, with their C below middle C to G compass that enabled a bit more variety in playing. It is

not inconceivable that the 32-whistle 1898 calliope instrument went into the 1905 Sullivan & Eagle wagon for Pawnee Bill, the reuse of the steam machines being a common practice. Legendary player Williamson W. "Bud" Horn (1850-1908), who inaugurated most of the new steam calliopes between the 1880s and his demise, was quoted by Lillie as stating this calliope was the best one on the road. Horn presided at the keyboard just one season, 1907.<sup>21</sup> A team of six bay Percherons drew the calliope in parade.

By comparison to any other wild west organization investment in parade wagons, the \$16,000-plus Lillie spent over a span of three years on six new vehicles was unprecedented and never equaled. It even stands comparison with the approximate \$12,000 investment the Ringlings made in 1903 for 11 new wagons for their parade. In fairness, one has to remember that Pawnee Bill's purchases were spread over a three-year period, during which the Ringlings also had a first bandwagon and several new cages built, the costs of which are not in the 1903 figure quoted above. Regardless, it is clear that Pawnee Bill made a huge investment in the street parade, over \$300,000 in today's dollars.

What inspired Lillie to spend so much hard earned capital on just six parade wagons? With the return of the Barnum & Bailey show to America from Europe, James A. Bailey sent the Buffalo Bill's Wild West to the Old World for a two year tour that was later extended an additional two years, through 1906. The years away coincided exactly with the years of Lillie's big spending. Pawnee Bill could have viewed the absence of his primary wild west competitor from 1903 to 1907 as the time to make his play for the American wild west audience.<sup>22</sup> In Lillie's mind, as with other contemporary American showmen, the way to earn the public's favor was in the street demonstration, by which so many people judged the quality of the show to be seen on the lot. It also served to remind local citizens that it was Circus Day, or, more correctly, Wild West Day.

The completion of the wagon



Nellie Oram was one of the few female steam calliope players. She also did a musical novelty act on the Mighty Haag Show. Pfening Archive.

orders between 1903 and 1905 gave Lillie a magnificent set of parade wagons, the finest to ever advertise a wild west aggregation. The six new vehicles, in conjunction with hold-overs from slightly before the turn of the century and a fleet of miniature tableaux with cottage like roofs gave him a more than adequate supply of parade vehicles. In a 1906 letter to a fellow showman, he listed the total number of parade chariots at 25, a healthy number for any traveling show, but especially so for a wild west aggregation. When the ethnological groupings on horseback or otherwise were added in, it became a march of imposing proportions. A parade order furnished by a show agent to a newspaper in 1905, which appears to be generally reliable, slated the procession to include the following units: Section 1, usually billed as the "Historic Wild West Pageant," comprised: Mounted Heralds; Major Gordon W. Lillie, "Pawnee Bill"; Miss May Lillie; Indian Women and Babies; Band No. 1 in Chariot; Princess Wenona; Western Cow Girls; Mexicans; Tableau Wagon; Sioux Indians; Jubilee Singers on Tableaux Wagon; Miniature Wild West, comprising Lilliputian Stage Coach, Prairie Schooners, etc., all

drawn by Shetland Ponies; Cowboys; Fife and Drum Corps; U. S. Cavalry Detachment; U. S. Artillery Detachment; Band No. 2; Cheyenne Indians; Prairie Schooners, Overland Mail Coach, Rocky Mountain Burros, etc. Section 2, titled the "Great Far East Cavalcade," consisted of: Mounted Heralds; Types from the Orient; Arabian Band; Arab Horsemen; Tableau Wagon; Russian Cossacks; Electric Organ; South Sea Islanders; Singhalese with Camels; Tableaux Wagon; Japanese Cavalry; Australian Boomerang Throwers; Philipinos (sic); Steam Calliope.<sup>23</sup> In addition to the listed entries, photography documents at least three carriages and several racing chariots included in the march.

The greatest single difference between the wild west marches and those staged by circuses, beyond the western theme of the participants, was the absence of caged beasts and other exotic animals in the western productions. Pawnee Bill's 1907 courier explained it this way. "The Pawnee Bill Show does not carry a menagerie. There is none of that stench of decayed animal matter so conspicuous at circuses. The air breathed is pure at all times, and the 'Circus Headache' is unknown." We suspect the headache was a euphemism for the inability of those with tender constitutions to tolerate the aromatic presence of animals.

Apparently horses did not count in this matter. Instead of "exotic" animals, one saw more horses with a variety of mounted riders and alternate forms of domestic, or "western," lead stock, including longhorn steers, oxen, mules and bison. In many cases these were hitched into teams to draw Conestoga wagons or similar prairie schooner type vehicles. Later, animals from foreign lands, such as Filipino cattle, were added to the show's lead stock.

Despite the possibility of "Circus Headache," Lillie proceeded to acquire a herd of five elephants for his 1906 tour at a cost of \$7,500. He turned to circus broker and animal dealer William P. Hall to supply the requisite animals.<sup>24</sup> They marched in the daily street parade and also did a turn in the arena.

Show publicity for 1906 stated that the parade would be continued as a big feature. It reportedly included 240 people, 195 horses, 28 ponies, twelve mules, four elephants, eight camels and twelve buffalo.<sup>25</sup> After viewing the wild west parade in 1907, a reviewer for the Kenosha (Wisconsin) *Evening News* penned, "Compliments were heard on every side in effect that Pawnee Bill made as good a showing on his parade as any high class circus." The extent to which Pawnee Bill's procession included non-western elements may have caused one trade journal writer, possibly under the influence of a 101 Ranch agent, to state this about the 1909 Miller Bros. and Arlington 101 Ranch procession, "The Miller Bros. 101 Ranch is a wild west; that's all, and nothing else. There is no spectacular effect attempted or created, and no mixing in a circus element until the real advertised object is lost." Continuing along those lines, one wonders if the Great Far East and other elements caused the Millers and Arlington to insert the adjective "Real" into their wild west title to discredit the circus-like aspects of the later Two Bills Show combination.<sup>26</sup>

#### Dispersal of the Parade Wagons

The April 11, 1906 death of James A. Bailey set into motion a series of actions that culminated in Pawnee



Ernest Haag's personal charm, as well as his long years of experience as a traveling showman comes through in this photo taken later in life. Pfening Archives.

Bill selling his six finest parade wagons to overland circus impresario Ernest Haag in 1908. Following the sale of these great pieces no traveling show in which Lillie owned an interest ever staged another parade. The vehicles that had substantially enhanced Lillie's street presentation served to elevate Haag among smaller railroad show operators.

Lillie appreciated and recognized the international popularity and value of the Buffalo Bill title and the personal presence of the legendary man himself. The Buffalo Bill title was probably the most famous show name of its time, though not the most successful financially. Bailey's death resulted in the sale of the physical plant of Buffalo Bill's Wild West to the Ringlings, who had little interest in the operation. At the same time, Mrs. Bailey sought to find a buyer for her interest in the performance portion of the Buffalo Bill partnership. Both deals focused on the involvement of Pawnee Bill as the best prospective buyer. The consummation of the deals brought about the formation of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Combined With Pawnee Bill's Great Far East for 1909.

Lacking a substantial private fortune and operating off cash flow, the

only method whereby Lillie could raise the necessary cash to swing the deal was to sell off assets or find a partner. Lillie judged the finely crafted parade wagons of 1903-1905 to be disposable, especially since the Buffalo Bill show, his principal competitor and the title of which would lead in the newly combined show, had not staged a parade since its 1907 return from Europe. One must not forget that there were no parades staged by the Barnum & Bailey show from 1905 to 1907 and that there was some movement within the industry to shed the traditional, but obsolete and costly, street demonstrations. With a static show operation in the offing for the next season, Lillie started to peddle the parade vehicles as early as September 1907. Letters he sent to William P. Hall reveal some of his tactics in selling. Lillie's initial offer was sent to Hall on September 3, 1907, quoting a bargain price of \$35,000 for the entire outfit of 23 rail cars, 25 parade wagons and 16 baggage wagons, plus tents, seating and all other apparatus. The livestock was an additional \$5,000. There was urgency to the matter as the contract for him to play Wonderland Park for 1908 was apparently staring Lillie in the face. Lillie tried to tempt Hall with another letter dated six days later, enclosing a missive that he had received from Joe Miller. He and his brothers had staged their wild west at the 1907 Jamestown Exposition and planned to go on tour for 1908. The Millers wanted to buy the show, which was priced right, but didn't have the cash because they had taken a bath at the unsuccessful fair. Hall received another offer from Lillie dated September 28, countering Hall's September 5 note stating that Lillie's prices were too high. Lillie responded by sending Hall his receipts for various purchases, including the Sebastian invoice for the bandwagon and tableau. The last letter they exchanged on the matter was written by Lillie on October 9, when Lillie asked Hall to return the letters and receipts that he had sent earlier. Sadly for Lillie, but happily for field show history, Hall did not comply. The Sebastian bill languished in Hall's possession until it came into the hands of Col. William

H. Woodcock, Sr., who preserved it for posterity.<sup>27</sup>

As time passed, Lillie pressed the sale by other methods, listing his offerings in an advertisement in the March 7, 1908 issue of *Billboard* (page 39). There the numbers were changed to 18 tableau and parade wagons, one electric organ wagon, one calliope and 20 baggage wagons. It was a long eight and one-half months, an entire summer season, before Ernest Haag (1866-1935) finally put his name on a contract dated December 26, 1908 in Pawnee, Oklahoma.<sup>28</sup> The transaction made a railroad showman out of Haag. His overland circus was still on tour at the time, playing New Roads, Louisiana the day the contract was consummated. Unlike so many deals wherein one lot of equipment is sold for one specified sum, each and every wagon was set forth at a particular price in the contract. The negotiations between Lillie, a proud gentleman in every sense of the word, and Haag, a folksy but shrewd showman, must have surely proved interesting, especially when one examines the detailed payment terms of the contract. The method suggests considerable haggling by the two gentlemen.

The grand "Band Wagon," that had cost Lillie in excess of \$4,000 five years before, was sold for \$2,000, a 50% discount. The \$3150 "Japan Wagon" went for \$1200, a 61% reduction. The "Calliope" brought \$800, 42% of its original \$1900 expense. The three other wagons, called out as the "Oriental Band Wagon," "Organ Wagon" and "White Tableau" were listed at \$800, \$1200 and \$800 each, respectively, the tableaus discounted by nearly 50%. Haag's purchases, which included five flat cars, three stock cars, four baggage wagons, two spot-lights, wardrobe and plumes, a pair of runs, a horse tent, eight camels and eight ponies, totaled \$15,785. A report in the January 30, 1909 issue of *The Show World* inflated the cost only a modest 26%, to \$20,000. It was surely the biggest purchase Haag made during his eventful circus career and was also one of the best bargains in circus histo-

ry. With the sale of the six parade wagons to Ernest Haag, Lillie no longer played a role in their existence. He did remember them, though, with great interest, corresponding with circus enthusiasts about them three decades later. At the time he probably thought he did OK in the Haag sale, if one remembers that he had tendered the entire 23-car outfit to the Millers for \$35,000.

Haag wasted no time in making arrangements for his new properties to be shipped back to his Shreveport, Louisiana quarters to be molded into his first railroad circus. Lillie turned his attention to the operation of the fifty-car Two Bills Show, an enterprise that traded on its famous names and did not parade. In the long term, Lillie should have listened to his wife, May, who wanted to avoid involvement with Buffalo Bill. It led to his eventual departure from show business. The late Richard E. Conover speculated that Lillie used the Haag deal proceeds to make his final payment on the Buffalo Bill physical plant to the Ringlings, on May 26, 1909.

Haag created something of a personality cult. Looking at his adver-



This 1914 Reynolds Beal painting is perhaps the earliest color depiction of a steam calliope, other than those found in lithographs. Courtesy Hammer Galleries.

tising materials, one finds his portrait prominent in all of them, whether heralds, couriers, one-sheet posters or large, multiple sheet billing stands. There was something a bit vain, perhaps, in his character, or insecurity, or possibly he thought that the force of his personality would create an allegiance among his show visitors. The latter may have been his primary motivation, for indeed a strong following did develop in certain parts of the country for the "Mighty" Haag.

Ernest Haag's pride in his new

The Haag performing personnel in front of the Pawnee Bill Oriental Tableau. Pfening Archives.



wagons, coupled with the attraction that the circus presented to painter Reynolds Beal (1866-1951), caused a rare, historical color record of the Pawnee Bill wagons to be created. Haag commissioned the Erie Litho Company to create a special one sheet showing five of his new wagons in full color. Almost never in the twentieth century were specific circus parade wagons commemorated in specially designed paper by a smaller railroad circus. The poster, undated, was likely printed for Haag shortly after the purchase was made, perhaps as early as 1909.<sup>29</sup> The poster shows the bandwagon with a solid gold body, the flags on the corners being in life-like red, white and blue. The gold-embellished red wheels were mounted on a red undergear. The Japanese Wagon was predominantly gold with some red body areas. The undergear was red as were the wheels, save for the gold hubs. The Organ Wagon was principally red with gold carvings. Silver was applied to the pillars, drum supports and flutes on the sides. The wheels were done in a creamy yellow with red hubs and two color, light blue and gold, sunbursts. The Oriental Tableau was red with gold carvings. The undergear was red with red wheels and yellow sunbursts. The White Tableau had a white body with gold carvings. The undergear was yellow, as were the wheels, which had white sunbursts.

Beal realistically depicted the sixth wagon, the steam calliope, in a 1914 painting labeled simply "The Mighty Haag Show." Beal's paint-

The Pawnee Bill Oriental Tableau on Sells-Floto in 1929. Pfening Archives.



The Pawnee Bill calliope on the Wortham carnival. Pfening Archives.

ing, which because of its six years removal from the date of acquisition, may incorporate alterations to the original Pawnee Bill paint scheme. It depicts a red-bodied wagon with gold carvings. The interior of the calliope was a royal blue while the space inside the central side oval was green. Light blue and yellow sunbursts were on the predominantly red wheels.<sup>30</sup>



Over time Haag made a few minor changes to the wagons, such as deleting the throne chair from the Japanese Wagon. The most unusual change was performed on the Band wagon. Haag, who was clean-

shaven, had the flowing locks and facial hair removed from the bas-relief representation of Pawnee Bill on the right side sky-board. The raised let-

tering reading "PAWNEE BILL" below the driver's seat, mounted on a carved cartouche, was replaced by a painted legend, which read "HAAG." In at least one season the solid body paint of the bandwagon was replaced by alternating vertical stripes.<sup>31</sup> A mishap involving the bandwagon occurred in September 1914 when it overturned into a ditch after striking a telegraph pole in Palmyra, Pennsylvania. No one was injured but the incident may have proved the end of the unusual driver's seat arrangement. Thereafter the driver sat on the roof of the wagon, in the usual fashion.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to the three stocks and five flats from Lillie, Haag picked up three additional cars from other sources, taking to the road in 1909 on 10 or 11 cars.<sup>33</sup> John Havirland's

The Pawnee Bill White Tableau on Wheeler Bros. in 1916. Pfening Archives.

notes indicate an expansion to 13 cars in 1910 and 1911, and to 14 in 1913, the last year for which data is available. The number of cars placed it in the same category as the Al G. Barnes, Frank A. Robbins and Sparks circuses, but its parade was by any standard superior to any equally sized railroad circus. It enabled Haag to go into any city, impress its citizens with the quality of the street procession and thereby gain their confidence to buy show tickets, regardless of the relative ignorance they held concerning the quality of his performance.

Haag concluded his career as a railroad circus man following the 1914 season, a year that proved to be something of a financial disaster. He went back to the road with a wagon operation. Via three different sales, five of the six Pawnee Bill wagons eventually ended up being owned by railroad carnivals. The last to reach carnival ownership was the great bandwagon. Haag apparently had a great personal fondness for the mobile masterpiece and did not sell it when he sold the remaining five wagons to others. He parked the bandwagon inside a barn at his Shreveport, Louisiana quarters, at the intersection of Thornhill and Columbia, where it remained until he was finally convinced to sell it to the second edition of the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West. Equally impressed with its artistic presence, the wagon served as the Millers' lead band wagon from 1925 through their final season of 1931. While with the Ranch a polychromatic paint scheme was applied, perpetuating a multi-color scheme that had first been applied for Haag by 1912. This type of decoration became common in the mid-1920s and could be found on parade wagons owned by a number of circuses including Al G. Barnes and Sells-Floto. The number 80 was assigned to the wagon on the Ranch.

The second edition of the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West was not a success and proved to be a continuous drain on the financial health of the ranch in Oklahoma. The premature and accidental deaths of Joe C. Miller (1871-1927) and George Miller (1881-1929) pushed Zack T. Miller (1878-1952) into a solo role as proprietor and leader. Adding to the traveling show problems faced by Zack were a divorce action, the Great Depression and dwindling returns from oil patch investments, not to mention the daunting task of managing the sprawling ranch itself. The tour of 1930 ended in early August and served as a prelude to the final season, which ended at Washington, D. C. on August 4, 1931. The entire, vast 101 Ranch empire was placed into receivership the next month.

In the complex and convoluted dispersal of the Ranch assets, the traveling show, minus the title,



The Pawnee Bill Columbus bandwagon on Miller Bros. 101 Ranch in 1925. Pfening Archives.

came under the influence of Lew H. Wentz, a "financial wizard" and a political kingpin from Oklahoma City. Various parties attempted to resuscitate the show, including Zack Miller himself in 1932.

After those efforts failed the bargain hunters and tire kickers started knocking, showmen like George W. Christy (1889-1975) and E. E. Coleman (1893-c.1985). One side of the papers from each of their efforts survives and provides some insight into the dispersal of the Ranch show assets.

Christy's contact came first, in January 1935. Wentz wrote Christy on January 18 and said that he did not own the property outright but held a mortgage for many times worth the show's value (listed at \$212,000 elsewhere) and could convince the other trustees to accept a fair offer for it. Christy wired Wentz on January 30 asking for a price

The Pawnee Bill bandwagon in the Bill Hame winter quarters in 1945. Pfening Archives.



before making a trip to Maryland, Oklahoma with his prospective buyer on February 7. Wentz had previously referred to Christy's associates in a January 18, 1935 letter. We believe that Christy was trying to broker the Ranch show equipment to Jess Adkins (1886-1940) and Zack Terrell (1879-1954), who were framing the new Cole Bros. Circus for 1935. They eventually purchased 25 baggage wagons and about five railroad cars, an acquisition revealed in the April 20, 1935 issue of *Billboard*. No mention of Christy is made in the coverage, but he also sold Adkins and Terrell the bulk of his defunct Christy Bros. Circus. Somewhat surprisingly, the former Pawnee Bill bandwagon and several other parade vehicles were not among the wagons that headed north to the Cole show winter quarters.

Christy made another pass at the Ranch wagons, receiving a couple of letters from the trustees in March 1936 that offered any of 24 wagons he cited at \$150 each, or all plus some extras for \$2,000. The depression and limited market for railroad show wagons dictated such low prices. Nothing came of the offer, but again Christy sold more of his own equipment that year, this time his former Lee Bros. show property to cowboy matinee star Ken Maynard.

Many years later, Christy committed his recollection of his dealings with Wentz and others to paper. He recalled that he was offered the entire Ranch show. The deal went south after Mrs. Zack Miller pleaded with him not to take the show, her husband then being away in

Louisiana on business and unable to defend his interests. Christy, who admittedly didn't have much scratch of his own at the time decided not to upset anyone by consummating the purchase and let the offer lapse.<sup>34</sup>

The Coleman connection came via letters that one Fred Olmstead composed on behalf of Wentz. He attached an inventory of the remaining property to the one dated November 3, 1936. In it the former Pawnee Bill bandwagon is listed as "80 Tableau Wagon." Nothing ever came of the Coleman contact, but the Dayton, Ohio showman saved the correspondence.<sup>35</sup>

While the recently published histories of the Pawnee Bill bandwagon have generally been accurate, at least two sources include fanciful accounts that have no factual basis. Ellsworth Collings' 1938 volume, *The 101 Ranch*, includes the following passage in his book (page 183). "The band wagon, which could not be duplicated at any price, contained on one side life sized wood engravings of the Aztec Sacrifice and on the other a life size group of the landing of Ponce De Leon. It was a work of art done many years ago by a famous German wood carver, and that was the only piece of old equipment about the show. Nothing was old about that wagon but the woodcarving. The wheels and all other parts were new."

While Tom Tucker, the 101 Ranch wagon master may have repaired or somewhat altered the wagon, not much else of the Collings account withstands scrutiny. Collings' erroneous panel identifications were repeated in Fred Gipson's 1946 volume, *Fabulous Empire, Colonel Zack Miller's Story* (page 378). Collings claimed that after the 1931 closing show personnel so severely vandalized the bandwagon carvings that they could not be recognized. It appears that Gipson relied upon an exaggerated account, as the principal carvings on the wagon today remain largely as Robb and his assistants artfully executed them in 1903.

The picked-over residuals of the Ranch show, including wagons and railroad cars, languished in Oklahoma until 1938. At that time William H. "Bill" Hame (1886?-1960), a Texas railroad carnival owner, expressed an interest in acquiring

the steel railroad cars that had transported the show. The circumstances of these cars are something of a mystery as no steel flats are included in the inventory that Olmstead sent to Coleman two years before. Starting with a portable merry-go-round about 1918, Hame moved up to a gilly operation before buying his first complement of about eleven wooden cars in 1926.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the inflated number of 35 cars from the Ranch, Hame purchase included about seven baggage wagons and several former circus parade wagons. They were the former 1902 Sells & Downs steam calliope, the former 1903 Ringling Bros. Great Britain Tableau, a 101 Ranch tableau with carved bison heads and American Indian portraits and the original Pawnee Bill bandwagon. In order to get the flats, Hame stated that he was obligated to take the wagons on them. He later said the purchase started him on something of a hobby, "the collection of old show equipment."<sup>37</sup>

The Hame winter quarters in Ft. Worth served as a repository for the wagons, rides and other items he accumulated in the next twenty years, his holdings also numbering 10,000 acres of Texas grazing lands and a vast amusement empire. This was no mean accomplishment for a man who was stated to be illiterate by his son-in-law. Hame had the parade vehicles repainted in a polychromatic style and periodically displayed them on his midway. The earliest dated photos of such use are from February 1941. While there is evidence of the former steam calliope, Great Britain and 101 Ranch

baggage wagons being used on the Hame operation, no photographs have yet been found that place the great bandwagon on the Hame show.<sup>38</sup>

The Hame show converted to trucks about 1952, leaving the Ranch wagons and other show memorabilia simply as the owner's hobby. It is possible that the Pawnee Bill wagon appeared at the Southwest Exposition & Livestock Show in Ft. Worth at some time. The late Tommie Randolph observed three wagons at the May 1953 event but did not clarify their identity except to state, in error, that they were all Pawnee Bill pieces that had come from Ponca City with about a dozen other wagons.<sup>39</sup> Two years after his death, the Hame descendants placed the former circus wagons and three Hame Shows baggage wagon on loan to Circus World Museum. Arriving on Bill Hame Shows' Mt. Vernon Mfg Co. flat cars #10 and #20 with the ex-Pawnee Bill bandwagon were the modified ex-Ringling Bros. 1903 "Great Britain" Tableau, the altered 1902 Sells & Downs Steam Calliope, a former Miller Bros. 101 Ranch baggage wagon bearing Hame #114 and three Hame baggage wagons, one being notable for having been built by William Frech of Maple Shade, New Jersey. The loan was converted to an outright gift on December 30, 1964.

The wheels presently on the bandwagon are slightly smaller than the originals, but the replacement rear springs elevate the body higher

The Pawnee Bill bandwagon at a Milwaukee parade. Pfening Archives.





above the ground than the originals, which give it something of a top-heavy appearance today. To conceal the taller springs, a painted board was placed outside of each rear spring. The Pawnee Bill Bandwagon now bears a mixed external identity, the merger of decorative elements applied during ownership by both Lillie and the 101 Ranch. Hopefully one day it will be restored to the original gilded brilliance of its days when it led the grand street parades of Pawnee Bill's Wild West.

The reported sale of equipment by Haag to carnival owners Clarence A. Wortham (1882-1922) and Tom W. Allen was finally confirmed in a photograph, which Tom Parkinson discovered after many years of searching. Taken about 1915, it shows flats of one of the Wortham & Allen shows loaded with the Japanese wagon, the steam calliope and the White Tableau. It would not be a stretch to believe that Lillie's favorite, the organ wagon, was also on the train somewhere, possibly the other wagon under a protective cover. Another circus style wagon on the train, a cage wagon, has a design that suggests a Bode origin. It was quite common for the larger railroad carnivals of the 1910s to stage complete street processions, often with former circus parade wagons as the featured elements. With their purchase from Haag, Wortham & Allen could put a very respectable presentation on the streets of any community visited by their traveling midway. Nothing is known of the wagons after their use

A parade illustration in a 1907 Pawnee Bill Courier. Pfening Archives.

by Wortham and Allen. It is possible that they were acquired by John H. Garrett of Rice Bros. Circus fame. He had a traveling show called the Dan Rice Circus on tour about 1917 and the couriers of that operation featured pictures of the former Pawnee Bill wagons, some of which were snapped by Bock. Barring use by another carnival, it's likely that they simply rotted away or were dismantled.

The Oriental Tableau probably went directly from Haag to Jeremiah J. "Jerry" Mugivan (1873-1930) and "Bert" C. Bowers (1874-1936), who placed it on their Robinson Famous Shows by 1915. A photograph in the Albert Conover collection placed it there, the show title visible on the marquee behind the wagon. It served on their subsequent John Robinson Circus through 1922. In 1921 it was the clown bandwagon and carried number 46. For 1923 it was transferred to their Sells-Floto Circus operation, where it paraded through 1924. It was assigned the number 45 and carried the clown band in parade. In 1925 it was with the equipment leased to Chester Monahan for his 10-car circus bearing the Gollmar Bros. title. The next year it was a part of the 10 cars which formed the Heritage Bros. Circus, operated by Arthur Hoffmann. Both shows were foreclosed by the American Circus Corporation with the assets being returned to

Peru quarters.<sup>40</sup> Unlike other tableaus and bandwagons that were relegated to storage after the Corporation quit parading in 1926, this one served on the 1929 Sells-Floto. It was part of the eight cars of equipment added to the show at the Boston, Massachusetts date to accommodate the crowds attracted by the featured star, cowboy matinee idol Tom Mix. There is a #45 wardrobe wagon with a length of 14 feet in a 1929 Sells-Floto wagon list, which may be the former tableau. The presence of the vehicle is documented in an exposure made by Arthur Toeves, now in the Robert S. MacDougall collection.

In the early 1930s, Jess Adkins, then managing the Peru, Indiana show winter quarters for the Ringling interests, arranged to have the central portion of one side of the Oriental Tableau removed and donated to the Miami County Historical Museum. Other accompanying wagon panels bear the name W. H. Henderson and the date 2-35, along with a WPA notation. Presumably the painting of the wagon panels was assigned to this artist as a Depression-era project. Displayed for years in the upper reaches of the Miami County Courthouse, the carvings can be seen today in the museum's new Singer Building location. Other decorative elements from the wagon, the sky-board carvings, were placed on a large box body tableau with painted sides that served on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. Usually identified as

tableau #75 on the 1934 show, the pieces are now preserved with the vehicle at the Circus World Museum.

Tableau #75 originated as a drop frame baggage wagon, perhaps on Sells-Floto or Hagenbeck-Wallace in the 1920s or early 1930s. It was altered into a tableau by the retrofitting of large framed paintings to the sides for the 1934 tour. The conversion was discovered when the wagon was restored at the museum, at which time photographs were made and filed. The remainder of the Oriental Tableau was presumably consumed in the wagon burnings at Peru in late 1941, or before. Tableau 75 served on Hagenbeck-Wallace again in 1935 and then in 1937-1938. It was on the 1939 Great American Circus, the 1945 Arthur Bros. railroad circus and was donated by Louis Goebel to the Circus World Museum in 1963.

The White Tableau served on Haag as late as 1911. In 1916 it was photographed as the reserved seat ticket wagon on the big 25 to 30-car Wheeler Bros. Circus, which lasted but one season. How it came to be part of that enterprise is unknown. Al F. Wheeler (1882-1957) and his supporter, Baltimore newspaper executive Van Leer Black, purchased equipment from Tom Allen and it is possible that they bought the wagon directly from the carnival sheik. Showman Fred B. Hutchinson later brokered the entire Wheeler show for sale, offering it in a full-page ad on the back of the February 3, 1917 issue of *Billboard*. Most of the show went to the Polack brothers, Harry R. (1877?-1919) and Irving J. (1885-1949), who were then touring two or three different railroad carnivals, one bearing the Polack Bros.' Twenty Big Shows name and another the Rutherford Greater Shows title.<sup>41</sup> Like other carnival proprietors of the 1910s, they staged a circus style street parade. The Polack acquisition is the last knowledge of the former White Tableau.

The first Pawnee Bill bandwagon, the one with organ pipe decorations that initiated Lillie's parade wagon ownership, was among the last items to be sold, perhaps because of its vintage. Sometime after the season of 1908 it went to the Campbell Bros. Circus of Fairbury, Nebraska, along



The 1884 Buffalo Bill Wild West bandwagon in parade. Buffalo Bill is on horse at back of wagon. Buffalo Bill Historical Center.

with four elephants, water buffalo and other properties. The tableau does not appear in either of two parade panorama photographs taken of the Campbell parade in 1908, suggesting an addition after that season. It went with the Campbell chattel from the bank that took control of the property to William P. Hall after the 1912 season. In 1913 it was on the Cole Bros. Circus that was comprised largely of ex-Campbell properties and in 1916 it was #10 with the Orton Bros. Circus, both short lived enterprises which rolled out of and back into Hall's Lancaster, Missouri farm. The last representation of it is found in a 1917 courier of a show called the Dan Rice Circus. The veracity of the information in the courier is open to question, as the photographs contained therein depict not only this tableau but also the Pawnee Bill bandwagon, the Japanese Wagon and the second major tableau to be presented here. All of the photographs are from the years when the wagons served on Pawnee Bill. Indeed, the one of the subject bandwagon was taken by Bock.

#### Parades of the Wild West Competition

The quality of parades staged by wild west organizations varied considerably. With little doubt, the parades of the Pawnee Bill's Wild

West between 1903 and 1907 were among the finest ever produced by a western-themed traveling show, and certainly the most outstanding staged until the wild west troupes of the 1910s spent significant money for similar features. They far eclipsed the pre-1903 parades of the better-known Buffalo Bill's Wild West, which were dominated by human and equine participants and a minimum of capital investment. For Cody the issue was re-enacting western history; for other showmen, it was making money. Lillie's original emphasis on the street demonstration may have been his way of recognizing that his competition was not simply other wild west troupes, but also the traveling circuses that staged eye-popping marches on the city streets as an allure to spend money.

Cody's show had a bandwagon in 1884. That conveyance and the Deadwood stagecoach were rescued when the steamboat on which the show was traveling to New Orleans was rammed and sank in mid-season. The bandwagon might be the simple painted dray wagon of extended length shown in one well-known photograph taken shortly before his September 4, 1884 engagement in New York City. There is a description of a mid-May 1885 parade at Chicago in Walter Havighurst's *Annie Oakley of the West* (1954, page 41). It is described as being led by Cody on horseback, followed by a six-horse team drawing a bandwagon, presumably the one from 1884. It was followed by mounted American Indians,

a miner with pack mules, more Indians, Mexican Vaqueros, Annie Oakley in a carriage, cowboys and steers and terminated with the Deadwood stage-coach.<sup>42</sup>

The partnership with James A. Bailey brought with it the transfer of two fancy circus parade wagons from the defunct Adam Forepaugh circus for 1895. They were a thirty-year



The steam calliope on Kit Carson's Wild West in 1913. Pfening Archives.5.

old Fielding-built bandchariot featuring

carved lions and acanthus leaf scrollwork on the sides and one large, but two-decade old tableau that had originally been a steam organ wagon on the W. C. Coup Monster Shows. Both were still mighty impressive in gold leaf, but they were dated in terms of the styling to be seen in Pawnee Bill's parade.<sup>43</sup>

At its turn of the century zenith, Buffalo Bill's march included those two Forepaugh bandwagons, Sweeney's mounted cowboy band, the show's two electric light wagons, a stage coach, two prairie schooners, three buggies or carriages, two field pieces with caissons, a life-saving beach service wagon (a boat on a wagon chassis) and a multitude of mounted Rough Riders and ethnological groupings. The show printed and distributed a special parade courier, presumably on the streets immediately before each parade, which included a complete order for the march. One issued on July 7, 1899 at Concord, New Hampshire is filed at the Circus World Museum. Buffalo Bill's Wild West paraded for the last time in America in 1902 and did not reinstitute the march upon its return from Europe in 1907, or while under the subsequent control of Cody, the Bailey estate, the Ringlings or Pawnee Bill.

Lillie's parades set a high standard that others found hard to match. One of the few significant wild west horse operas during the first decade of the 20th century was Col. Fred T. Cummins Wild West of 1906. It had two fine parade wagons, a large tableau bandwagon and a steam cal-

liope both built by the Bode Wagon Company the year before for the Sautelle-Welsh circus. It lasted a single season. The Luella Forepaugh-Fish Wild West of 1903 had a new Sullivan & Eagle steam calliope and some former Great Wallace cross-cages, but its bandwagon remains unidentified.

To find wild west parades with a parade vehicle complement nearly equal to that of Lillie's from 1903 to 1907 one has to move forward to the next decade. Miller Bros. and Arlington's 101 Ranch Real Wild West of 1908-1915 started out with a conglomeration of second hand bandwagons, tableaus and calliopes from various sources. It did not hit a peak until 1910, when the Millers bought several large tableaus built by Leonhardt of Baltimore, Maryland at the sale of the Norris & Rowe circus. Next in size Young Buffalo Wild West of 1909-1914 had a fifty-year old Fielding bandchariot, a large Bode-built tableau, several lesser tableaus and a steam calliope, but the attention-getting parade entry was a large oxen hitch pulling a prairie schooner. The fourth-ranked Kit Carson's Buffalo Wild West of 1911-1914 had one of best assembly of wagons, featuring a number of large wagons built by the Bode Wagon Company of Cincinnati, which had previously been Martin Downs (1865-1909) circus property, and also formed the nucleus of the 1910 Jones Bros. Buffalo Ranch Wild West. The 1913 Arlington & Beckman's Oklahoma Ranch Wild West outfit had the bandwagon made from the 1871

Howes Globe telescope, and perhaps a steam calliope, but not much else of note. Irwin Bros. Cheyenne Frontier Days Wild West Show of 1913-1914 had the bandwagon and tableau from the defunct Lemen Bros. Circus but no other vehicles of consequence. The parades of other western troupes of the 1910s were all a

cut below Pawnee Bill's grand cavalcade of 1903-1907.

#### Notes:

1. Unidentified Decatur, IL, newspaper, Pawnee Bill's Wild West file, Circus World Museum, hereafter CWM.

2. The show's 1894 European route is detailed in a route book through August 16, and thereafter it spent another 108 days on the continent, until at least as late as November 22, 1894. Thus, an 1894 date is unlikely. The print was in the Joseph T. Bradbury collection.

3. Pawnee Bill's Wild West file, CWM.

4. The Iowa view was likely taken on September 16, 1900. See *White Tops*, July-August 1993, p. 46. *New York Clipper*, December 31, 1898, p. 741. In *Annie Oakley of the Old West* (1954, p. 190), Walter Havighurst told a tale about James A. Bailey considering the replacement of William Sweeney's famed Cowboy Band on Buffalo Bill's Wild West with a steam calliope in the mid-1890s. The author believes that this can be dismissed as overt speculation by Havighurst as opposed to having any basis in fact. A musically limited steam calliope would be hard pressed to replace a versatile musical accompaniment for the wild west performance. From the tone of his words, Havighurst denigrated Bailey's overall "circus" influence in mobilizing the wild west and was generally ignorant of his bonafide contributions.

6. *Billboard*, April 11, 1936, p. 41; *Billboard*, March 5, 1927, p. 90; Louis Leonard Tucker, *Cincinnati's Citizen Crusaders: A History of The*

*Cincinnatus Association 1920-1965*, Cincinnati Historical Society, 1967, pp. 48-54.

7. *New York Clipper*, December 3, 1898, p. 683. There is a slight chance that the purchase from Hynicka was only an instrument, possibly one from a Cincinnati area steamboat.

8. *Billboard*, February 7, 1904, p. 9.

9. The measurements were taken in 1998. The altered and thoroughly dried out wagon weighed 10,930 pounds when last checked in 1968.

10. Letter from Gordon Lillie to William P. Hall dated October 9, 1907, William P. Hall Papers, CWM. For details on the Sebastian Wagon Company and the big wagon order, see the author's "The History of The Golden Age of Chivalry," *Bandwagon*, March-April 1997, pp. 24-31.

11. Fabric information courtesy of Sherry Huhn.

12. Allen L. Farnum, *Pawnee Bill's Wild West, A Photo Documentary of the 1900-1905 Show Tours*, Schiffer, 1992. The Farnum book provides excellent accompanying photography to this monograph.

13. Letter dated October 31, 1962 from Jean LeRoy to Charles P. Fox, CWM.

14. Though the Vanderlyn painting has never been the subject of public criticism according to the Architect of the Capitol, the bandwagon was objected to in a public manner by Wisconsin's American Indians in recent times. See H. Nicholas Muller III, "Bang! Bang! History Lives," *State Historical Society of Wisconsin Columns*, June-July 1993, p. 2.

15. Fred Fried, *Artists In Wood*, (Clarkson N. Potter, 1970, pp. 110-111); letter from Fred Fried to the author dated November 29, 1977. Fried's biography of Muller is in the National Carousel Association's journal, V, 3, pp. 3-13. Also see Brian and Elinor Morgan, "The Daniel Muller Story," *Merry-Go-Round*, XXVI, 1, pp. 6-31.

16. *Billboard*, October 10, 1902, p. 12; *New York Clipper*, November 1, 1902, p. 804.

17. Images in *Billboard*, July 5, 1941 and Alexander P. Clark scrapbook, CWM.

18. The February 18, 1905 issue of *Billboard* (page 11) stated that the work that Fulton and Walker were

doing for Pawnee Bill was four new parade wagons, and not two. We can only hypothesize that two of the tableau wagons that Bock dated earlier were actually not on the show until 1904. The report may also have been an overstatement of the facts.

19. Letter to William P. Hall dated September 28, 1907, William P. Hall Papers, CWM.

20. The elements in Rush's piece were suggested by Charles Taylor's 1808 volume, *The Artist's Repository*. See *19th Century America Paintings and Sculpture* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1970), plate 34.

21. Letter from G. W. Lillie to William P. Hall dated September 28, 1907, William P. Hall Papers, CWM; *Billboard*, March 23, 1907, p. 31.

22. Employing similar logic, when Lillie decided to spend the entire season of 1908 at Wonderland Park in Revere Beach, Massachusetts, the Miller brothers and Edward Arlington perhaps an opportunity to put their wild west on tour, filling the void left by the absence of Lillie's operation.

23. Canton (Ohio) *Morning News*, June 14, 1905. The exact same order was also printed in other newspapers, which confirms that it was furnished by the show's agent.

24. Letter from Pawnee Bill to William P. Hall dated January 12, 1906, William P. Hall Papers, CWM. See also *Billboard*, April 28, 1906, p. 32.

25. *Billboard*, May 26, 1906, p. 24.

26. *Variety*, July 24, 1909, p. 12.

27. All of the Lillie letters are in the William P. Hall Papers, CWM. Woodcock later donated the important Sebastian invoice to the museum.

28. Col. William H. Woodcock, Sr. secured a copy of the original contract from the Haag family. It is now in the Fred D. Pfening, Jr. Archive.

29. The lithograph was once owned by Col. William H. Woodcock, Sr. and later Tom Parkinson. It is now at CWM.

30. The Beal painting is on the cover of *Reynolds Beal, American Impressionist*, 1991 Hammer Galleries,

New York.

31. Photograph, Tom Parkinson collection, CWM.

32. *Billboard*, September 12, 1914, p. 62.

33. *The Show World*, April 24, 1909, page 25; Isaac Marcks notes, CWM.

34. Copies of the Christy letters are in the Tom Parkinson collection, CWM.

35. E. E. Coleman file, CWM.

36. *Billboard*, June 19, 1926, p. 84.

37. Letter from Tom Parkinson to Charles P. Fox, May 29, 1962; *Billboard*, June 27, 1953, p. 94.

38. See Bob Goldsack, *A Portfolio of American Carnival Vintage Photos*, (1994), p. 34.

39. Letter from Tommie Randolph to Tom Parkinson dated February 7, 1953, Tom Parkinson collection, CWM.

40. For accounts of these shows, see *Bandwagon*, May-June and July-August 1968, and March-April 1969.

41. The *Billboard*, January 22, 1916, p. 56; February 17, 1917, p. 26.

42. The 1884 photo is in the Denver Public Library Western History Collections. William F. Cody, *History of the Wild West* (Philadelphia, C. R. Parish & Co., 1888), page 699.

43. The history of these vehicles is detailed in Richard E. Conover, *The Fielding Bandchariots* (1969), pages 32-39 and articles by the author in *Bandwagon*, March-April 1983, pp. 30-32, July-August 1983, pp. 28-29 and May-June 1989, p. 13.



# BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS

=14<sup>TH</sup>. SEASON 1899=

GRAND EUROPEAN SUCCESS

**PAWNEE BILL'S**

**HISTORIC WILD WEST**

INDIAN MUSEUM  
AND GRAND MEXICAN HIPPODROME  
VISITED BY ROYALTY ENDORSED BY THE NOBILITY  
APPROVED AND LAUDED BY THE PUBLIC AND PRESS  
OF CONTINENTAL EUROPE

A HEALTHFUL AND INSTRUCTIVE ENTERTAINMENT  
HONESTLY AND HONORABLY PRESENTED CONDUCTED ON  
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61 CHANCERY LANE.  
NEW YORK  
251 - 5TH AVE.  
PHILADELPHIA  
605 SANSON ST.

RECEIVED  
JAN 23 1899

Pawnee C. T. Jan 18-99

Dear Friend

Your letter to hand and I  
was pleased to hear from you and  
to know you were all well. May & I are  
here on a visit here & who are  
will stay & more. I was sorry to hear  
you were crowded out of the business &  
was in hopes some day you would  
get up on top but such is life - you  
must not get discouraged - Things are  
booming out here every one has lots of  
money. When I get back I will try to  
run over and see you with best wishes from  
May & I to you Mrs C. & the babies

Your sincere friend  
Pawnee Bill  
Pawnee

# Beasts and Ballyhoo

## THE MENAGERIE MEN OF SOMERS

BY TERRY ARIANO

*This paper was presented at the 2004 Circus Historical Society convention.*

Somers, New York is nationally significant for its association with the development of the early menageries in America. These menageries later joined with the early circus troupes to form the uniquely American circus. The Elephant Hotel in Somers is the oldest existing symbol of this chapter of American circus history. It was built by Hachaliah Bailey, one of the first Americans to tour exotic animals for public entertainment. Following in his footsteps, many local individuals prospered in the earliest forays into this enterprise. Somers became a central meeting place for these itinerant companies. Coming from a background as cattle drovers and animal handlers, these menagerie proprietors were resourceful and hardy entrepreneurs whose innovations directed the course of this form of popular entertainment in America.

Hachaliah Bailey (1774-1845) was raised on a farm just south of the hamlet of Somers and the site of the Elephant Hotel that his father had purchased in the year he was born.

Hachaliah Bailey's home and barn. All illustrations are from the Somers Historical Society unless otherwise credited.



Hachaliah married Mary Purdy, and they had eight children. He was a farmer and, like many local men, also raised cattle, driving them south to stockyards in New York City. Bailey became one of the directors of the Croton Turnpike Company, which completed a toll road through the town in 1807 that became a major drovers route to the Hudson River. He was also part-owner of a sloop that he used to transport cattle by water from the southern terminus of the turnpike in Ossining to the city.<sup>1</sup>

The New York City stockyards were located at the Bowery, and drovers frequented an establishment there known as the Bull's Head Tavern. In one account, Hachaliah Bailey was the proprietor of the Tavern.<sup>2</sup> It was possibly here that Bailey was enticed to purchase an African elephant. The creature was the second brought to America, arriving into Boston harbor in 1804 and exhibited by artist Edward Savage in New England and the Northeast. The first elephant had been imported to America in 1796 by sea captain Jacob Crowninshield, and was still being exhibited along the eastern seaboard. Hachaliah purchased this second elephant for a reputed sum of \$1000. She was exhibited in the Hudson Valley in 1805 and in New York City in 1806, which was



Hachaliah Bailey 1775-1845.

possibly when Hachaliah acquired her.<sup>3</sup> She came to be called Old Bet, perhaps in contrast to "young" Bet, his daughter Elizabeth, born in 1805.<sup>4</sup>

It has been said that Bailey intended to use the elephant as a draft animal, like P. T. Barnum later did at his Bridgeport, Connecticut estate, Iranistan, as a publicity stunt. However, subsequent history suggests that he developed grander ambitions for the elephant. The story goes that he was shipped upriver on a sloop, then walked to Somers, where Hach kept her in the family barn. Bailey took Old Bet on the road and quickly profited from her as a public attraction. They traveled by night, stopping in barnyards and tavern courtyards to show by day, charging twenty-five cents admission.<sup>5</sup> From his frequent trips to the cattle markets of New York City, Bailey was

familiar with the tavern yard exhibition of animals. Realizing the public fascination in viewing exotic animals, he cashed in on their willingness to pay for the experience. By 1808 his coffers were expanded to a point that he took on two partners, Benjamin Lent and Andrew Brunn, each paying \$1200 for a one-third interest in "The Elephant." This document in the collections of the historical society reads "Articles of agreement between Hachaliah Bailey of the first part, and Andrew Brunn & Benjamin Lent of the second part. The aforesaid Brunn & Lent agree to pay the aforesaid Bailey twelve hundred dollars for the equal two thirds of the earnings of the Elephant for one year from the first day of this month. Bailey on his part furnishes one third of the expenses and Brunn & Lent the other two thirds, August 13th 1808."

In another 1809 contract in the Somers collection, Hachaliah Bailey (sic) bartered with Benjamin Lent, allowing him the one-fourth part of the use or earnings of the Elephant, for eleven months commencing August 15, 1809, and for which Hachaliah received the ownership of the Royal Tiger, owned by Lent. He adds "in case the Elephant should die within said time, I agree to allow said Lent at the rate of five hundred dollars a year for whatever part of said eleven months may remain unexpired." Lent had purchased the Tiger from Cyrus Cady and John E. Russell, on December 9, four days prior to this agreement.

Undoubtedly, Old Bet was a phenomenon in this new country. The sight of her, traveling down a country road, or anchored by her "tusk ring" to a post, was unparalleled. Crowninshield's elephant, when imported to this country, was 2 years old and stood only 6 feet four inches high, while Old Bet was described in an early account as being "13 feet round the body."<sup>6</sup> Rich and poor flocked to see the exotic creature, willing to pay a quarter of a dollar for the privilege. On June 25, 1812, Old Bet became the first elephant to appear with a



A Van Amburgh & Co. lithograph.

circus troupe in America. In a performance by Pepin and Breschard, the troupe "contrived a platform that fit on her back and upon which [the acrobats] performed some pyramids and other gymnastic displays."<sup>7</sup> Yet her renown was too brief. Tragically, while on tour near Alfred, Maine on July 24, 1816, Old Bet was shot and killed by Daniel Davis, a local man who was apparently aggrieved that poor farmers were spending hard-earned cash to see a wicked beast.<sup>8</sup> Old Bet's skeleton was recovered, mounted and exhibited in New York City at 301 Broadway in April of 1817. Later her hide was preserved and exhibited at the American Museum, near present City Hall in New York, in 1821.<sup>9</sup> The *New York*

A December 17, 1817 newspaper ad for the elephant Columbus.

**The Elephant COLUMBUS.**  
 TO be seen in the avenue opposite the Old South Meeting-house.  
 THE ELEPHANT is not only the largest and most sagacious animal in the world, but from the peculiar manner in which it takes its food and drink, of every kind, with its trunk, is acknowledged to be the greatest natural curiosity ever offered to the public.  
 The one now offered to the curious, is a male, and the only one ever exhibited in America. He is six years old, upwards of seven feet high, ten feet eight inches round the body, sixteen feet six inches from the end of his trunk to his tail; his ears two feet and one inch in length.  
 Admission twenty five cents; children half price.  
 Hours of Exhibition from 9 in the morning until 9 in the evening, Saturdays and Sundays excepted.

*Evening Post* of November 26 announced that the museum "has the whole hide of the Elephant who was wontonly shot in the town of Berwick as she with her keepers was passing from Boston to Maine. The animal was Known by the name of Bet. She was considered one of the most docile an tractable of her race, but she fell by the hand of a ruffian. She is now put up in as good a style as it is possible to expect, considering her immense size."<sup>10</sup> It was this

same Museum that P. T. Barnum acquired in the early 1840s. Regarding the fate of Old Bet's skeleton and hide, they undoubtedly succumbed to fire at the American Museum, a fate which continued to plague Barnum in his later museum and circus ventures.

Hachaliah Bailey, undeterred, proceeded to import two more elephants. In 1817 he and two partners, George Brunn and Isaac Purdy, his brother-in-law, purchased an eleven-year-old female who came to be called Betty, or Little Bet. She was leased, in 1823, to Edward Finch of Somers who successfully traveled the country with her. While leased to Gerard Crane of Somers and his partner John June of North Salem in 1826, Little Bet fell to a similar fate as Old Bet, and was shot in Chepachet, Rhode Island by a group of young men apparently out for some sport. Also in 1817, Hachaliah and his two partners paid \$8,000 for a six-year-old male elephant, named Columbus for the ship on which he was transported. He was exhibited in Boston on December 13th according to an ad in the *Columbian Centinel*, which claims it to be the only elephant in America at the time. Columbus was exhibited singly for the first seven years, throughout New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas. After a stint as part of a menagerie owned by Fogg, Quick and Mead, Columbus died in North Carolina in 1829 after being injured when a house collapsed around him.<sup>11</sup>

After the success of Hachaliah

Bailey in exhibiting Old Bet, many local individuals sought to become involved in importing and exhibiting exotic animals. The resulting success of these efforts led to a thriving "menagerie" business for many of the farming and drover families in Somers. Gerard and Thaddeus Crane, Benjamin and Lewis Lent, and members of the Brown, Purdy, Wright, Finch, and Ganung families, to name a few, were involved with aspects of the profitable menagerie business. Stuart Thayer notes "intrigued neighbors rapidly turned Somers into a Mecca for entrepreneurs and wild animals. When they weren't on the road, the animals were hidden away in local farmers' barns, some of which are still standing."<sup>12</sup>

Hachaliah Bailey served as a role model to a young P.T. Barnum, who wrote of meeting him when Hachaliah visited Barnum's store in Bethel Connecticut. Barnum was surely aware of Hachaliah's reputation as a successful menagerie owner, and apparently admired Bailey's entrepreneurial spirit. Barnum recounts a tale extolling Hachaliah's method of settling accounts with an unscrupulous partner who was exhibiting his elephant.<sup>13</sup> Barnum later became involved with traveling exhibitions, introducing human curiosities and extraordinary people such as Joice Heth, the Siamese twins Chang & Eng, Tom Thumb and Jenny Lind on world wide tours and in his American Museum on Broadway, in New York City. Although renowned as a showman and successful entrepreneur from the 1830's, P. T. Barnum never partnered with Hachaliah Bailey, as is constantly misconstrued. Barnum did not get involved in a formal circus until after Bailey's death, and not until 1881 did he lend his name to a partnership with James Bailey, the adopted son of Frederick, a distant relative of Hachaliah's, to form the circus which continues to bear his name.<sup>14</sup>

#### The Elephant Hotel



A G. F. Bailey & Co. Circus & Menagerie lithograph used in 1867.

As a memorial to his elephants Hachaliah Bailey built the Elephant Hotel, on a piece of land he had purchased from Thomas Leggett in 1807 for \$1250.<sup>15</sup> Bailey broke ground and built a brick stagecoach inn which was completed by 1825. Across the facade of the building were emblazoned the letters "ELEPHANT HOTEL." In front of the building he erected a tall granite shaft with a small gilt carved wood elephant atop it. The Elephant Hotel, fortuitously located at the intersection of the Croton and Danbury turnpikes, became an important stagecoach stop for the Eagle and Red Bird Lines from Westchester and Danbury. The building served as a travelers' inn, as well as a meeting place for the menagerie and circus folk that populated Somers and sur-

The Elephant Hotel around 1880.



rounding towns. It was known as the "best hostelry between New York and Albany in stagecoach days."<sup>16</sup>

Hachaliah Bailey served two terms in the New York State Legislature, then sold the Elephant Hotel in 1836 to Gerard Crane, another Somers menagerie owner, and moved his family to a place that became known as Bailey's Crossroads in Virginia. Members of Hachaliah's family continued in the circus tradition. His son Lewis often performed as a clown, and Lewis' wife Maria as an equestrian. In the 1830's sons Joseph Todd

Bailey and James Purdy Bailey toured the country as J.T. & J.P. Bailey & Co.

Hachaliah Bailey returned to visit Somers, where he died in 1845 and is buried in Ivandell Cemetery in the hamlet. On his monument are written these words: "Enterprise, Perseverance, Integrity," fitting words for the spirit of all the early menagerie men. Bailey was an early impetus for the menagerie fever which spread through the Eastern United States. As the menageries later accompanied and finally became an integral part in the circus, he was acclaimed as the innovator in beginning the menagerie tradition. No less a showman than P.T. Barnum paid him homage in his first of a series of autobiographies in 1855. Stuart Thayer calls him the "father" of the menagerie business in America.<sup>17</sup> And declares "If one was to choose a symbol of the menagerie business in America it would have to be the Elephant Hotel in Somers, New York."<sup>18</sup>

Numerous other townsmen became involved in importing exotic animals, managing traveling units, and performing in the exhibitions. The first and most notable member of the Brown family was J. Purdy Brown (1802-1834) who was born in Somers in a small house still standing near the Elephant Hotel. He introduced several innovations which were momentous in chang-

ing the nature of public entertainment.

Since its introduction in 1793 in Philadelphia, the circus, originally equestrian and acrobatic exhibitions, was performed in a closed circular arena of wood construction. Companies would play out their run in a large population center, then tear down the structure and move on. Early menageries consisted of small troupes of animals, traveling in crude wagons across rutted roads, stopping in taverns and barnyards to exhibit in a controlled location where admission could be charged.

In his 1825 season J. Purdy Brown, with his partner Lewis Bailey (son of Hachaliah), introduced one of the greatest innovations to the traveling show, a "round top" or circular canvas tent 90 ft. in diameter. Using a portable tent Brown could set up in small places between his major shows in metropolitan areas, stay as long as business warranted, and then pack up his troupe and move on. The tent allowed him to perform continuously and avoid down time between larger venues,<sup>19</sup> while bringing the entertainment to small towns.

J. Purdy Brown was a great innovator in moving his troupe around and advertising its appearances in advance. A large part of the public's circus experience was in the anticipation and arrival of the event. Menageries had traditionally paraded their animals into towns, either tethered or in cages on wagons that became increasingly ornamented. Circus proprietors had had little need for wagons prior to the introduction of the tent, but with the example of the menagerie showmen before them, and they soon joined the parade.<sup>20</sup>

The brothers Benjamin, Christopher and Herschel Brown, cousins to J. Purdy Brown, were involved with the menagerie business in the early 1820's. Benjamin Brown (1799-1881) worked for Hachaliah Bailey in the exhibition of Little Bet in 1823. He was employed by J. Purdy Brown and Lewis Bailey in 1825, the season that the first canvas tent was introduced. In 1826 Benjamin and Herschel operated the Royal Pavilion Circus. "Pavilion" being a euphemism of the time for the canvas tent.

Benjamin, Christopher and Hershel operated a circus for their cousin, J. Purdy, in 1828. Brown's company was in South Carolina performing when Charles Wright, another Somers native famed as a lion tamer, came into town with his menagerie troupe. The two companies appeared together, and as it seemed to be successful, they performed the rest of the season together becoming the first traveling combination of a menagerie and circus.

At this time, circuses were perceived as crude and, often morally offensive. Menageries were considered educational and harmless, and added respectability to the combination. The combination formed the basis of the uniquely American circus, with this fortuitous beginning with two Somers companies.

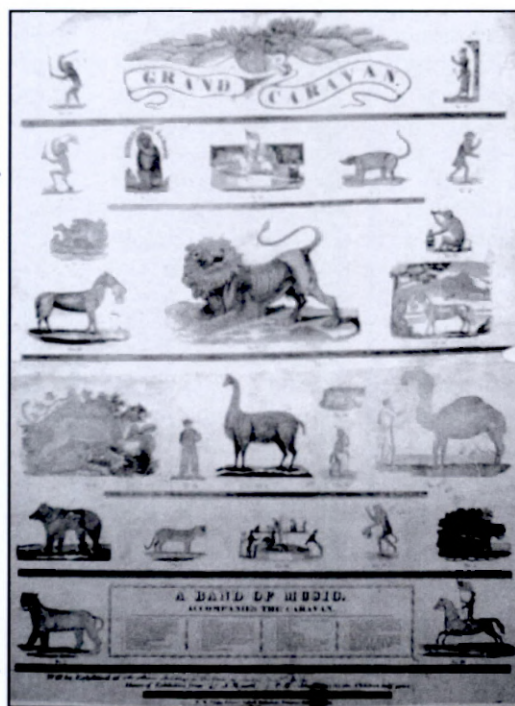
In a broadside from 1837 in the Somers collections, Brown & Company's circus advertised the 4 year old Rosaline Stickney in her first season of performance, along with her father Mr. [Samuel] Stickney and [Henry] Rockwell, a comic song by Mr. Ricardo, horsemanship by Mr. Levi (North), Chinese juggling by Mr. [John] Shay. Lewis Lent was manager and part owner of the company in this season.

Benjamin Brown and many others traveled extensively exhibiting their animals, ranging as far as the West Indies and South America. Benjamin also traveled as an animal buyer for June, Titus & Angevine, from nearby North Salem, the largest menagerie company of the period. In 1838 Benjamin traveled to the Great Kalahari Desert in Africa with Stebbins June, to purchase giraffes. June left a written account of traveling with the animals and his illness resulting from being bitten by a lion. Brown also wrote of his various illnesses contracted while traveling in the desert. Copies of his correspondence are in the Somers collection. Brown & June returned to America with five giraffes, which were exhibited in New York in the summer of 1840.<sup>21</sup>

In the fall of 1840 Brown took the giraffes to England with the Van Amburgh Menagerie where he met and married Mary Cops, the daughter of the Keeper of the Royal Menagerie at the Tower of London. He resided with the Cops family in the Tower until 1844, the only American known to have done so. As a wedding gift, the couple received an elegant pianoforte, which they transported to Somers and is now in the Somers museum. After returning from Europe, Ben Brown traveled one last season with Van Amburgh & Co., then sold his portion of the menagerie to Gerard Crane. Benjamin Brown was interviewed by the *New York Sun* in his 79th year, and was dubbed "The Oldest of Showmen" having spent the majority of his life in the business.<sup>22</sup>

Daniel, James and Charles Wright who grew up just up the road from the Elephant Hotel where their father Micajah opened a tavern, represent another Somers family that was part of the "peculiar calling" of the menagerie business.<sup>23</sup> Daniel Wright (1790-1864) toured the Midwest and settled in Ohio. James Wright (1799-1864) traveled extensively in the south, eventually set-

A Grand Caravan ad used on November 13, 1826.





A Bowery Amphitheatre broadside used on January 22, 1840.

tling in Alabama. Charles Wright (1792-1862) gained renown as the first "Keeper of the Lions" in America. He entered the business in 1822 as an employee of Finch & Bailey in the exhibition of Little Bet. In 1826 he worked with the "Grand Caravan of Living Animals" which became Carley, Purdy & Wright when Wright became one of the proprietors. Their menagerie was a large collection for the time, listing two camels, a leopard, two panthers (pumas) a Brazilian tiger (jaguar) two llamas, a hyena, an African lion, a kangaroo, a zebra, a wolf and some smaller animals. On November 21,

1829, an advertisement for the show appearing in the Pensacola, Florida *Gazette* stated "the keeper will enter the respective cages of the lion and lioness." Referring to Charles Wright, this was the first recorded notice in the United States of man entering a lion's den, predating the more famous Isaac Van Amburgh, of Fishkill, New York, by four years.<sup>24</sup>

As noted above, Wright, with the Browns, is also credited with the first recorded instance of a circus and menagerie traveling and exhibiting together, in 1828. Wright's caravan was also one of the first shows, circus or menagerie, to advertise seating, in 1830, and the first sizable show to visit many small towns, due to improved roads and the use of the canvas tent.

In 1828 Charles Wright married Elizabeth Maria Smith, of North Castle. They first resided on a farm in Goldens Bridge, where their ten children were born. It appears Charles retired from performing, but retained part ownership in the menagerie. In 1845 Charles purchased the farm in Somers once occupied by Hachaliah Bailey's family. Charles became a prominent member of the community. He was a director of the Farmers & Drovers Bank of Somers, served in the New York State Assembly and was a vestryman of St. Luke's Church.

His granddaughter, Caroline Wright, donated her farm and land to the Town of Somers, which maintains it as a historic site.

Gerard Crane (1791-1872) was another early animal exhibitor. In 1818 he and his brother Thaddeus traveled the countryside exhibiting a lion and lioness. In 1826 he and Lewis B. Titus leased Little Bet, the second elephant owned by Hachaliah Bailey. They sub-leased to Crane, June & Co., and during this time the elephant was shot in Chepachet, Rhode Island, in an incident similar to that of Old Bet. In 1833 Crane partnered with Spencer Gregory to form the menagerie Gregory, Crane & Co, which later featured a keeper (lion tamer), a female elephant named Flora, and a seven-hundred-pound polar bear.<sup>25</sup> Crane formed a combined circus and menagerie with

Edward Eldred, and was part of the Zoological Institute in 1835, using the title "Zoological Exhibition and American Circus United." Their company traveled through the small towns of New Jersey and Long Island, and carried a museum, probably the first circus to actually call the assemblage of curiosities and natural history items a museum.<sup>26</sup>

Gerard Crane returned to Somers, where he became Town Supervisor, 1833-37, and served on the board of directors of the Croton Turnpike Company and the Farmers & Drovers Bank.<sup>27</sup> He purchased the Elephant Hotel from Hachaliah Bailey in 1837 but sold it the following year to Hachaliah's first cousin, Horace Bailey, who was the bank's first president. Gerard Crane and his brother Thaddeus became associated with June Titus and Angevine from nearby North Salem, sometime after 1837; they were the monopolistic producers who became known as the "Flatfoots." In 1838 Crane, with June Titus & Angevine, acquired Van Amburgh & Co., starring the world-famous lion tamer Isaac Van Amburgh. The partners sold the menagerie prior to the 1851 season and retired.

In 1849 Gerard Crane built the Stone House, described by Charles Culver as "a fine large mansion of cut stone by the side of the turnpike, one mile north of the village. The building is finished in the best possible manner and presents an imposing appearance. Near the house is a long hipped roofed building, that is now a barn, but was built for and used as an animal house during the winter seasons" The house, a mile north of the Elephant Hotel, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Behind the house runs a small stream which appears on an early map as Rhinoceros Creek. Crane is reputed to have kept a rhinoceros in the barns, which local lore claims to have occasionally escaped and trotted through town. Crane's great accumulated wealth allowed him to commission portraits of himself and his wife Roxanna Purdy Crane, by the itinerant portrait painter Ammi Phillips, now considered one of the foremost early "folk art" American painters.



A Grand Caravan handbill. The John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

Of the next generation of Somers showmen, Lewis Lent (1813-1887) was born and schooled in the town, his father Benjamin having been a partner of Hachaliah Bailey's. Lewis grew up around menagerie animals and his early shows featured many animals, including the first troupe of camels in America. At age 13 he was already employed in the family business, and soon after is recorded as working for June Titus and Angevine. In 1834 he invested in J.R. & W. Howe, Jr., & Co.'s menagerie (of North Salem). Using his money, the firm purchased a half interest in June Titus & Angevine's rhinoceros, polar bear, leopard & their cages. In 1835, at the age of 22, he joined Brown & Co. circus, with Oscar Brown, brother of and successor to J. Purdy Brown. He became partner in Brown & Co. in 1836, most likely with funds from father Benjamin. Lent was a partner to Richard Sands, an English equestrian, in 1846, and managed Barnum's traveling menagerie in 1853-1854.<sup>28</sup> Lent is one of the early menagerie participants who crossed over to the circus business. Lent has been described as a jovial man and a huge one (over 300 pounds at his death), who insisted on being in charge of every aspect of his business operations--almost a sure sign of a successful man.<sup>29</sup>

Lent partnered with Rufus Welch, the great circus entrepreneur from upstate New York in 1856. He operated a successful railroad circus from 1866-1874 and was the proprietor of L.B. Lent's New York Circus in 1871, quartered on 14th Street in New York City. P. T. Barnum bought out his circus on 14th Street in 1872, but it burned to the ground in the first season. Lent went on to produce his New York Circus, Museum, Menagerie, Caravan & Zoological Garden at the site of Madison Square Garden on 26th Street, also predating Barnum at that site. He died in New York City in 1887, and is buried in Ivandell Cemetery in Somers.

The menagerie men of Westchester and Putnam Counties came to dominate the outdoor exhibition business in the northeast.<sup>30</sup> On January 14, 1835 at Somers, the menagerie men gathered at the Elephant Hotel to form a capital stock company called the Zoological Institute. Its stated purpose was "to more generally diffuse and promote the knowledge of natural history and gratify rational curiosity." One hundred and thirty-five signatures are on the articles of incorporation.<sup>31</sup> The list contained virtually all of the active menagerie owners and managers in the Northeast, as well as individuals whose businesses relied on the shows, such as Richard Hoe, a New York City printer who made advertisements and posters for circuses and menageries.<sup>32</sup> The organizers of the Zoological Institute set routes and performance schedules, monopolizing the business in the East.

With more than one hundred investors, the appraised value of the animals, equipment and real estate was \$329,325. They purchased a performance space in New York at 37 Bowery, which served as winter quarters. The equipment and animals were organized into 12 companies, five of which included circuses. The Association exercised a virtual monopoly on the animal show business. Some members were known as "The Flatfoots" by those who challenged their leadership "because they put their foot down flat against any

competitor bringing a show into the eastern territory."<sup>33</sup> The company disbanded after the financial panic of 1837, and its property was sold at an auction that took place at the Elephant Hotel on August 22nd and 23rd, 1837.<sup>34</sup> The name Zoological Institute was used for a number of years after by exhibiting companies.

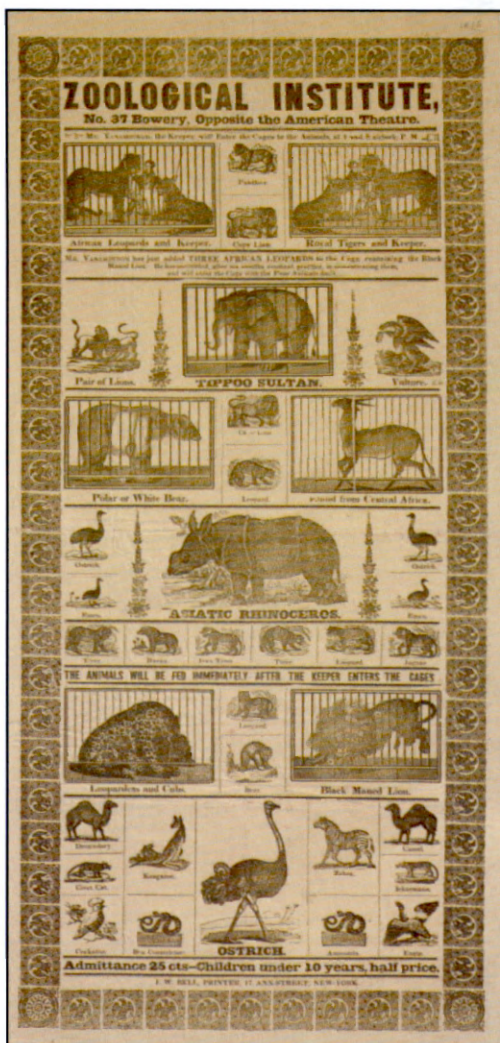
In neighboring towns other menagerie and circus companies came to the forefront. The June Titus and Angevine organization with whom Lewis Lent and Gerard Crane were connected, was from neighboring North Salem. Out of this area Epenetus, Jr. & William Howe of North Salem, James Raymond, Chauncey Weeks, Hiram Waring and Daniel Drew from Carmel, Nathan and Seth Howes from Brewster, a lion tamer named Isaac Van Amburgh from nearby Fishkill, and from across the border in Connecticut, Aaron Turner of Danbury and P. T. Barnum of Bethel were among the many who came to great fame.

Advertising and ballyhoo about the companies kept the audiences coming.

"The Grand Caravan is now announced as 'on its march' a month before its arrival. Tremendous show bills, on which the whole array is set forth as large as life proclaim everywhere the coming entertainment;

Lewis Lent, an early American circus owner.





A herald used by the Zoological Institute. The John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

and to cap the show we have a grand procession in which man and beast, some on foot and some on wheels, martial music, trains of carriages, cars and omnibuses, clouds of dust and oceans of popular amusement, all lend their aid," *Brattleboro Messenger*, 24 August 1834.<sup>35</sup>

These menagerie owners played a significant role in shaping the American circus into its traditional form. According to Stuart Thayer, "They imported the rare animals, hired lion tamers who soared to fame, combined the circus and menagerie elements which formed the basis of the American circus. They introduced the posters and couriers of modern advertising and with them the effusive language that

is still part of the entertainment business. It was their wagon shows that created the circus season, and in their visits to the towns and hamlets they educated an audience for the circus that still exists today."<sup>36</sup>

In 1839, profits from the menagerie business being plentiful, the second banking institution in Westchester County was formed. Given the prosaic title of the Farmers and Drovers Bank, it opened at the Elephant Hotel, with a list of officers who made up a who's who of the menagerie business. The 2000 pound safe from the bank, painted with lovely pastoral scenes, is still in the ground floor office, presently occupied by the Somers Town Clerk. The bank went national in 1865, and closed in 1905. Horace Bailey, Hachaliah's first cousin, served as the president of the bank. Horace purchased the hotel from Gerard Crane in 1837, and except for a brief period between 1868 and 1874 his family retained ownership of the property until it was sold to the Town of Somers in 1927.

### The Symbolic Value of the Elephant Hotel

In 1849, The Elephant Hotel was once again the scene of a huge gathering of menagerie and circus proprietors. A large ball to celebrate the anniversary of George Washington's birthday was held at the building, which was then attached to a wood frame annex that housed a ballroom. Hundreds of people attended from the surrounding areas and as far away as New York City. Elegant young ladies looking for eligible bachelors reputedly flocked there to meet the wealthy circus showmen. The event was chronicled in the New York papers as a spectacular social event where 300 couples were said to have dined and danced in shifts throughout the night.

"Westchester, which may be truly styled the empire county, has been agitated to its very center for more

than a fortnight past, in consequence of the stupendous arrangements for the annual celebration of Washington's Natal day, at the Elephant Tavern. The principal masculine personages who figured at the ball were the proprietors of menageries and circus companies with their immediate dependents and associates, most of whom are hopeless bachelors of the deplorable age of forty-five and upwards who although rich as grand Turks set more value upon a trained horse or elephant than the attractions of lovely women."<sup>37</sup>

For all of these individuals, The Elephant Hotel undoubtedly served as Mecca, a destination when one returned to the home village, a familiar place to gather with others who understood the way of life to which they were accustomed. The menagerie business faded after the mid 19th century, being absorbed as one element of the new monster shows that Seth Howes, William Coup, William Cole, Adam Forepaugh, the Sells Brothers, James Bailey, P. T. Barnum and others were putting together. The advent of the railroad introduced large circuses specially designed to move by rail, sometimes "requiring sixty to seventy freight cars, six passenger cars and three engines."<sup>38</sup> There was fierce rivalry between the traveling circuses, each striving to outdo the other with rhetoric and an onslaught of mudslinging advertisements, called "rat-bills."<sup>39</sup>

The Elephant Hotel remained a central icon in the Somers community, even as the menagerie and excitement of the circus years faded and the business generally fell into disrepute, becoming a topic unfit for discussion in polite company. The old brick building remained in the Bailey family but was leased to numerous short-term tenants for various uses. It became a renewed community focal point in 1927 when it was purchased by the Town of Somers to become the Town Hall, or Town House as municipal headquarters are known in Westchester County. With its name boldly painted on its façade and Old Bet perched on her high pedestal, this landmark is a constant reminder for those who know about those early days of the circus and a curiosity that lures the

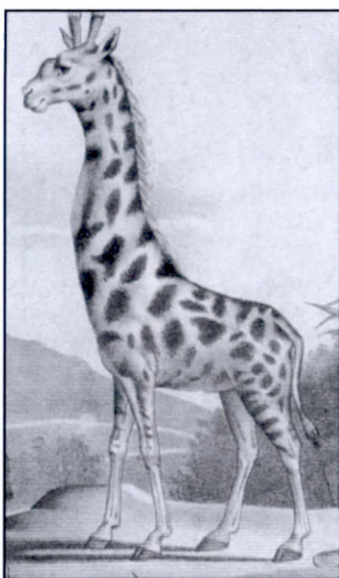
uninitiated visitor inside to discover Somers' unique and remarkable place in American history.

A giraffe as advertised by D. W. Kellogg in 1835.

In 1922 Ringling's Elephant "Old John" tromped from New York to Somers to lay a wreath at the statue of Old Bet. In 1956 the Somers Historical Society was incorporated, and was given quarters in the Town Hall. At the same time, the Hudson River Museum which had exhibited the mounted hide of the elephant Tip, once part of Adam Forepaugh's show, for 29 years, shipped her to the Somers Town Historian who stored Tip in his barn, while selling "shares" to raise money for the fledgling Somers Historical Society. Tip's tusks, though not currently on view, are now part of the collections at the Somers Historical Society.

The Somers Historical Society became involved in a 1966 controversy over the issuing of the circus stamp, claiming Somers' precedence over Delavan Wisconsin's involvement in the early American circus. As a result the stamp design was given an unveiling to record crowds in Somers, previous to being issued in Delavan. Numerous events over the years celebrate Somers' connections to the circus—including a recreation of Tom Thumb's wedding during the nation's bicentennial.

The Somers Historical Society's collection of circus and menagerie memorabilia rivals other major circus collections, if not in size, then in rarity and vintage. Along with descendants of many of the early menagerie and circus families in Somers, Dr. Hugh Grant Rowell, circus scholar, and collector, bequeathed his collections to the Somers Historical Society. His miniature circus is in on view in the building. The collections include early circus prints and advertisements, P. T. Barnum memorabilia; Tom Thumb's court suit; portraits, original documents, bills and



ed as a national Historic Landmark. It has fittingly become the repository for the documents and artifacts that tell the tales of Hachaliah Bailey and the Somers menagerie men who had seminal roles in the evolution of the American circus.

#### Notes

1. J. Thomas Scharf, ed. *History of Westchester County, New York* Vol. II (1886), 331.
2. Marion Murray, *The Circus From Rome to Ringling*, 126.
3. Stuart Thayer, "The Elephant in America before 1840," *Bandwagon*, Vol. 31 No. 1 (January-February, 1987), 20.
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25. *Ibid.*, 33.

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29. Thayer, *Traveling Showman*, 7.

30. Stuart Thayer, *Annals of the American Circus, 1830-1847, Vol. II* (Seattle WA: Peanut Butter Publishing, 1986), 38.

31. Articles of Incorporation of the Zoological Institute, 1835, collections of the Westchester County Historical Society, copy in Somers Historical Society.

32. Neil C. Cockerline, "Ethical Considerations for the Conservation of Circus Posters," *Bandwagon*, Vol. 46 No. 6 (November-December 2002) 6.

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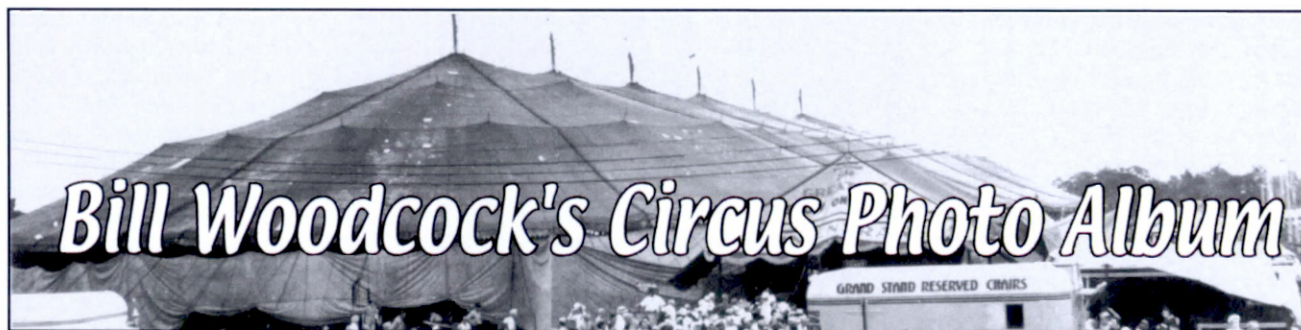
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This is Eddie Allen, without a doubt, the most successful elephant man of all time which is all the more remarkable since I don't think he ever trained a single elephant. He started out as a hand around the Corporation Shows and his first big break came when he landed the job working the five 101 Ranch elephants in 1933 which was one of the top acts of the day. Two years later this act was sold to Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell who were framing their new Cole Bros. Circus. Eddie was placed in charge of all the Cole elephants in 1935 which numbered 17 when the season opened and grew to 26 by the time they returned to the Rochester, Indiana quarters. With his wife Jean, they made a very handsome young couple and the powerful Press Department took full advantage as this picture indicates. (If I may digress, Hugo Schmidt told me that when he delivered Jumbo II, the African elephant behind Eddie in this photo, to the Detroit Zoo for the Hagenbecks, he didn't remember the year, she was pretty big already. While in this country he went to Chicago to see the Ringling show, and the only person in the menagerie who spoke German was "Camel Dutch" Narfski.)

Bev Kelley collaborated with Eddie on the book *Fun by the Ton* which got considerable acclaim. Eddie left the Cole show following the dreadful 1938 season. He was not big on missing paydays. His wife Jean remained on the show as a featured performer and eventually a very successful concessionaire. Years later with the Dailey show she was the first

person to show my wife Barbara how to skinny up on an elephant.

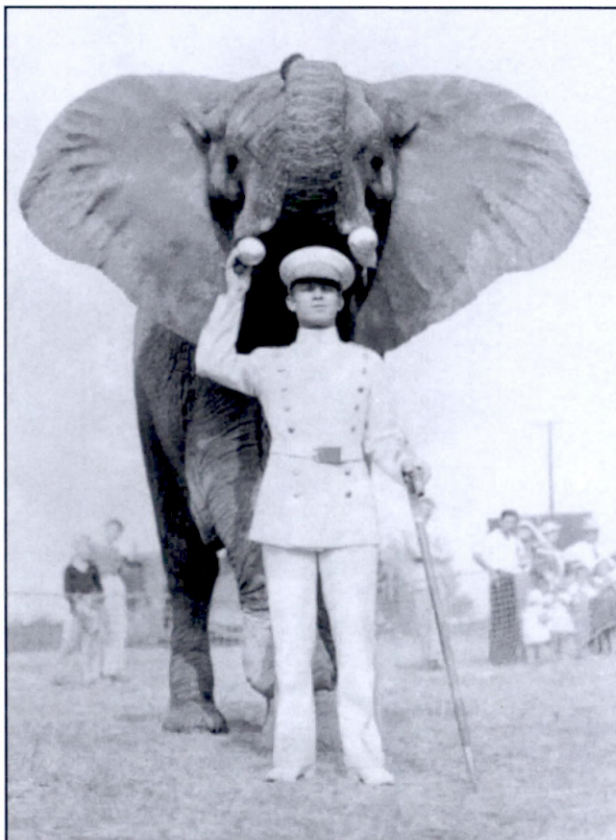
After Walter McClain got accidentally killed on the Ringling show in 1942, Eddie was hired to replace him. The timing couldn't have been better. John Murray Anderson was putting together a big elephant number called "Changing of the Guard" which had the elephant men wearing Busbys. It closed with a cross mount on the track with tall tubs in the center. Some time later he was manager of the main unit of Barnes & Carruthers big fair revue. By some quirk of fate he managed to get a job with Gene Autry, which culminated in his becoming Autry's personal manager.

In 1965 while we were on the

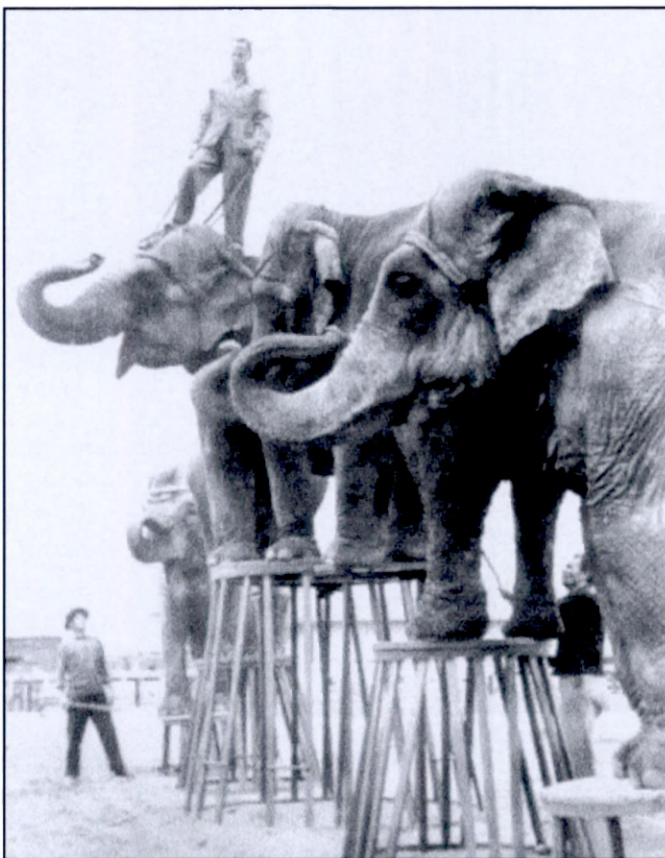
Polack show, I was chatting with Parley Baer when Eddie's name came up. I mentioned I had never met the man. Sometime later, Parley invited Barbara and me to his home in Tarzana. Upon arrival I discovered he had also invited Eddie and his wife. By this time he was a big Hollywood executive. He was very neat and dapper in appearance. His hands were manicured and lacquered. I tried to imagine those hands shoveling elephant crap, but to no avail. I asked him many questions about his days with the Cole show, but he didn't have much memory for detail. He did tell me one interesting story, however. He said about a year after he left the Cole show he was in Chicago and thought he would drive down to Rochester to see if there was any chance of collecting back wages. No sooner had he pulled into the winter quarters that he realized he was in the middle of a huge fire. He ran into the animal barn and helped release as many elephants as he could, but several were lost.

That evening as we parted Eddie told me how much he enjoyed talking about the old days and added that I was the first person he had talked to in twenty years that wasn't trying to promote him for something. Later I asked Parley just what Eddie did for a living. He gave me his title, which I have long since forgotten, but I do remember that he said Eddie and his wife owned an island off the coast of California.

The next picture is of Eddie putting together the



"Changing of the Guard" number in Sarasota. These tubs were placed on the track in front of the center ring and when the five elephants shown were in position, the rest of the herd would mount behind them. In other words, this was the centerpiece for the traditional cross mount. I have been told that under canvas a small caterpillar would drag the big tub down the track and spot it before the number started. Robert Ringling liked the music so well that this number was repeated for three more seasons. I doubt if the big tubs even made it through the first season. Being the war years and the show being very short handed, I'm sure loading and unloading these things was low on the priority list. The elephant on the center tub is Barnes show Ruth.



This next picture is Claude "Slivers" Madison with the Clyde Beatty Circus in 1947 or 1948. I always thought this was the perfect size herd for a fifteen-car show. The first three elephants, Mary, Sidney and Anna May, came to Beatty from the Cole show following the 1938 season in lieu of back wages. Four of the remaining five were the "Coca Cola Elephants," or "Coke Herd" that Asa Candler, Jr., whose family made a huge fortune from Coca Cola, bought for a private zoo he operated in Atlanta from 1932 to 1935. In June 1935, they were sold to Charlie Sparks for his Downie Bros. Circus and eventually came to Mr. Beatty. Their names were Babe, Cora, Inez, Marion and Addie. Addie was named after Sparks' wife, but for some reason the elephant guys couldn't remember it and called her Hattie.

Twenty years later when Slivers was presenting Bertha the ele-

phant at the Nugget Casino in Reno, we came to town with the Polack show that had the Shrine date. Slivers spent most of the morning with us at the building and later both he and his wife Jo came to the matinee where they sat right in the front row. We had two "up and over" elephants, Opal and Anna May (not the same Anna May with Beatty). Barbara normally did the trick with Opal but on this occasion I couldn't resist the temptation to show off. I

decided to do the trick using both elephants side by side, me ducking under Anna May. As both elephants came down over us I felt my tight Hussar uniform pants rip from eave to bale ring. When I came out the back, all I had was two pants legs and the worst thing was that we had most of the act remaining. After the show Slivers came by and didn't say a word, but I could see where he had been wiping the tears from his face.

Hugo Schmidt arrived on the Ringling-Barnum Circus with five German elephants in mid-season 1947. After a brief stay on the show, he added three Ringling elephants, Minnie, Dolly and Sudan, and continued on to Sarasota. John Ringling North said that five elephants wouldn't fill up the center ring. This is a rare picture of Hugo practicing the new act in Sarasota. The African Sudan was the last of the 1936 Pygmies, now big as a house. My mother and I saw the show in 1948 in Minneapolis. Cap Curtis got us seats. I was thirteen and completely spellbound and hoped the performance would never end. In the elephant act, it was the first time I ever saw a one-foot stand, a hind leg walk, or a leg carry. The last two tricks had been done for many years, but this was the first time I ever saw them done.



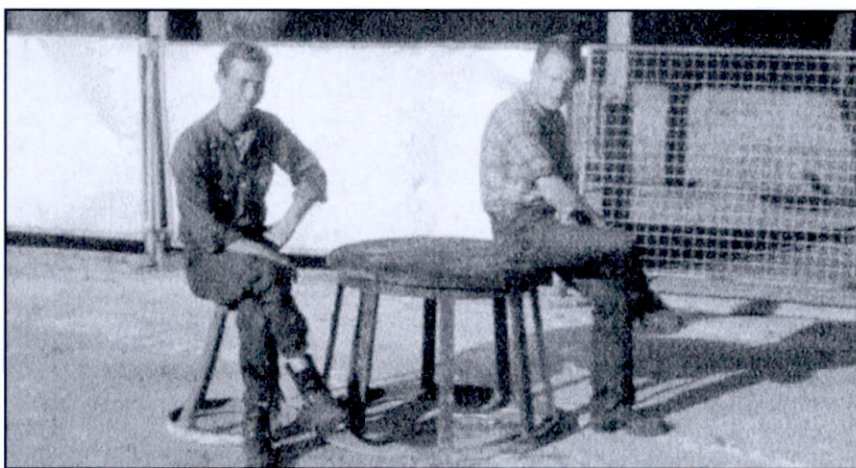


I took the last picture myself when I worked for Hugo on Ringling in 1957. The two men in the photo are Ed Healy and Benny White who worked the two end ring elephant acts on Ringling that year. One day we were all in this general vicinity at the Sarasota quarters when suddenly a horse and rider came charging into the center of the yard. To our amazement it was John Ringling North in full riding regalia. He sat motionless as did we for quite a while until his groom came running up, out of breath, took the reins and then North dismounted. He said "Good morning Hugo and how are my elephants today?" Hugo answered, "fine," to which North said, "very good, carry on." He then remounted his horse, wheeled around and galloped off in the direction he had come from with the groom on foot in hot pursuit. The next time I saw him was

on dress rehearsal night in the Garden where he was in the audience in a tux. The third and final

were in the audience. I was told that he came from Europe annually for a check up at the Mayo Clinic. After the performance his limousine was parked outside the area where we kept the elephants and he and his brother passed by with the few people remaining with the show that he knew.

After he was seated in the car he leaned out and said something to Charly Baumann that caused Baumann to laugh. After the



time I saw him was again with the Ringling show in 1978 at the International Amphitheater in Chicago. He and his brother Buddy

limo pulled away, Charly walked over to me and said, "He wanted to know if this was the Red show or the Blue show."

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# Side Lights On The Circus Business

PART THIRTY-NINE

By David W. Watt

*Editor's note. The dates listed are the dates the article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Gazette.*

**December 15, 1917**

Not long ago I told you something about the quaint, historic city of Halifax and the terrible accident which occurred there last week brought it back to my mind more vividly than ever before. It was late in the eighties that we showed there for two days, and as we arrived in the city Sunday morning, it gave me some time to look over the principal show places of the city, among which was the most interesting old barracks, with its many English soldiers, which was built nearly, if not quite, a century ago. As the barracks were located on a hill not far from the water's edge, it is most likely it suffered much damage.

The city at that time was something like three miles long, but was rather narrow, and many of the little, narrow streets ran to the water's edge where many of the large boats run, as this is practically the clearing place from the St. Lawrence River and where many of the boats take their last tonnage before pulling into the ocean for their long voyage.

A large party of show people was made up Monday afternoon, just after the performance and went in a body to the barracks where the officers took us in charge and showed us all through. It certainly was one of the most interesting sights that the show people had ever witnessed. Some distance away from the barracks was a huge ditch some 35 feet wide and 20 feet deep, encircling the entire barracks. In a few moments warning it could be filled with water. This looked as though, when the fortifi-

cations were built, much of the fighting of the war in those days must have been largely hand fighting. Halifax at that time was what you might call a sailors' city, and the rough element was not an easy one to handle.

We showed in a vacant lot surrounded by an old-time rail fence that looked to be a century or more old and bordering on the roughest part of the city. The man in charge of the ticket wagon, whose duty it was to lower the hind wheels of the wagon something like six inches so that the people could see in buying their tickets and also to keep the fast crowds from pushing the wagon around, did not take into considera-

The cover of the 1889 Adam Forepaugh route book. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.



tion that the front of the wagon was much higher than the back part where the door raised and where the tickets were sold. After sinking the wheels it made the wagon quite a little lower than it should be. Just when the crowd was the thickest, a highwayman pushed his way into the crowd and with a dagger in one hand, he reached into the bottom of the wagon where the money was all dropping and undertook to take a handful of it, but at the same time his hat fell off and I grabbed him with my right hand by the hair of the head. Just as he made a strike at me with the dagger, the two men who stood at the side of the wagon, one at each wheel, seemed to strike him at the same time, and it looked for a moment as though he were standing up dead. Although his knife struck my right hand, it inflicted only a slight wound which made the blood run freely, but in a day or so was all right. The men grabbed him and threw him into a fenced ground some twenty feet away and a patrol came and took him away. It was all done in a minute; everything went along just the same. With a handkerchief tied around my hand, I managed to sell tickets as though nothing had happened.

This was the first time that the Forepaugh show had visited Halifax and few, if any, of the people had ever been there before. In their spare moments, they looked over the most interesting parts of the city. We arrived there on one road and departed on another, the roads being located some three miles apart. The show people took their time and walked a portion of the distance, as they were anxious to see as much as possible of the interesting old city of which they had heard so much. As the barracks and the soldiers were thoroughly English, that alone was interesting to the show people, being a new experience for most of them.

Through the courtesy of T. B. Russell I was handed a few days ago a route book of the Forepaugh show for the season of 1889. It was the last season the show was run under the management of Adam Forepaugh. Mr. Russell at that time was cashier of the privileges



and his route book, which he prizes very highly, is the only one that I know of in the country. This book contains many interesting incidents which happened during the season, a part of which I will give you. The bonanza cities of the season were Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Charleston, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Omaha, Lincoln, Topeka, Wichita, Springfield, Kansas City, St. Joe, Des Moines, Keokuk, Cedar Rapids, Marshalltown, Ottumwa, Springfield, Bloomington, Danville, Frankfort, Kokomo and Muncie. Three performances were given in Detroit, Chicago, St. Paul and Minneapolis. The shortest run made was from St. Paul to Minneapolis, ten miles. The longest run was from Staunton, Virginia to Charleston, 233 miles. Total number of miles traveled during the season, 9,395. Business was excellent that season with little bad weather and everybody was extremely happy. A miniature cyclone struck the show at Sioux Falls, Dakota Sunday, August 19 and did considerable damage to the canvas. While at Stillwater Monday, August 12, many of the show people visited the state prison and talked with the three noted Younger brothers who were serving life sentences. Later in the season, September 15, Bob Younger died of consumption. While en route from Marshalltown to Oskaloosa on the morning of September 19, the first section (cage train) parted going down grade at Scarsboro 20 miles north of Oskaloosa, and the engineer in running back to pick up the balance of the cars caused a collision which telescoped two flat cars, doing

Forepaugh's Cleopatra Barge after being rebuilt following the 1889 wreck.

considerable damage. The costly Cleopatra barge, Globe's tableau, Eagle tableau, the lion cage, yak cage and many wagons were smashed. Two canvasmen were injured, but not seriously. All of the cars were more or less damaged.

Cause of accident, a sleepy brakeman. Loss to show estimated at \$15,000. On the evening of September 7 when the show trains were being transferred from the Gulf Road to the Missouri, Kansas & Texas, in order to reach the show grounds, the trucks were wrenched from under one of the cars, causing a wreck, by which several cages containing lions, tigers, hyenas and leopards were broken to pieces. The animals escaped, causing considerable excitement all over the vicinity. Men formed in companies and surrounded the animals and succeeded in recapturing all but one jaguar which escaped to the woods on Grand River, four miles from town. The accident caused a delay of two or three hours in the parade and performances which were witnessed by 15,000 people. The jaguar was later captured, but died on arriving at the show, September 14. During the parade at Kansas City Monday, September 9, the large bandwagon containing Prof. Ganweiler's Military Band overturned at the corner of Ninth and Broadway and all the musicians were more or less injured. Louis S. Taylor, a young man from Thompson, Connecticut, who played the trombone, had his knee cap and left leg below the knee broken by striking the curb. He was also considerably injured about the hip and back. Jacob

Ganweiler, the clarinet player, had a shoulder dislocated and an arm fractured. He went home to Quincy, Illinois. F. A. Warren, whose family lived at Adrian, Mich., had his right shoulder dislocated. He also received cuts and bruises about the face and head. Henry Baxter, cornetist, whose home was in Warrentown, complained of internal injuries. Warren and Taylor, the men who received the worst injuries, were taken to the Sister's Hospital. Special Agent Semon received orders from Mr. Forepaugh to see that the injured men receive the best of care at his expense.

#### December 22, 1917

I have been asked so many different times by different persons if the hard work along parades and late work at night did not tell upon the average circus performer and have a tendency to shorten their lives. I must say absolutely "NO" for I know of no business where people of high class bask in more sunshine than the high-class circus performer, whatever his work might be. For a thousand times I have seen high-class performers while doing their act receive encore after encore from the audience and when through with their work, they would be all smiles. When they would return to the dressing room, be it man, woman or child, they would always receive congratulations from their coworkers whom it seemed to please as well as it did the performer. A little later in the cook tent perhaps many an old driver or a canvasman would say "Lizzie or Dick, (whichever the case might be) you certainly made a hit with the people this afternoon." This would bring naturally more smiles and a vowed intention of still doing better at the next performance. We all know that the smiles will go farther and keep us young longer than tears.

Some time ago I told you something about "Nobby" Clark, one of the oldest and most reliable men in the business. I couldn't help but notice him more particularly than any other his neat tidy appearance, was clean shaven and a smile on his face which spoke better than words that he was at peace with all the world. I told Nobby the last time I saw him that I thought his object in keeping

clean shaven was so that at night the smile would show up all the plainer. At the homecoming I was given a compliment by an old friend. A dozen or more good fellows were relating old time happenings when an old-timer slapped me on the shoulder and said, "Boys, here's a man that in his time in the business was always on the job and the hardest working man that I ever knew. At that time Dave had two pay days, one for the managers and performers running the show on Wednesday and the working people on Saturday. It never made any difference if it was 100 in the shade and a turn-away business both afternoon and night, many times we would think that Dave could not wade through the work and pay salaries just the same, but in all his time with the Adam Forepaugh show, we never missed getting our pay on Wednesday."

"Do you recollect, Dave, at Minneapolis, where we gave three performances, forenoon, afternoon and night? You got into the wagon at 8 o'clock in the morning and never stopped selling tickets until nearly 11 o'clock at night. The show was turning away people at every performance, and as everybody knew it was Wednesday a pay day, they were unanimous in their belief that it would be impossible for you to pay salaries, so we delegated one of the boys to go out and ask you if you wanted to pay salaries and you told him, 'Certainly, go in and tell them the faster they come, the better.'"

This compliment naturally made me feel chesty and for a time again I really thought I was back in the business again, young as ever, and could sell 6,000 tickets in an hour, but at this time, the clock struck one and the lights were dimmed and we were all sent on our ways to our different hotels. When I got in my room, I realized I was not as young as I once was, for I could figure that I was far beyond the draft limit and would soon sleep dreaming of the days that had been.

One Sunday morning as the result of a defective flue, the frame building known as the dog house was partly burned at the winter quarters of Ringling Brothers circus. The interior of the building was badly scorched, part of the roof sagging or falling in.



Two dogs, one a whippet hound, the other a fox hound, died of suffocation. Some of the other dogs were carried out more or less limp, but will recover. A small bear was given his freedom and afterwards caught by those employed by the show. The horses were removed from danger. The monkeys were trained in the same building. Most of the paraphernalia was removed and no damage was caused to other buildings.

Clinton Mills, who has been with the show since 1910 had to go to a physician to have his burned fingers cared for. He was the only person injured.

The fire happened during church service and some people left to investigate. At the tabernacle a member was appointed to ascertain the location of the fire and report, which was done. The total loss was not over \$1,000.

The following letter from San Antonio, Texas will give you something of an idea of what the circus people will do in that city on Christmas day.

When the show folk from all avenues of the broad firmament of entertainment get together for their annual cheer feast on Christmas day at the Gunter Hotel, they are going to lay aside all thoughts of war and pestilence. Percy Tyrrell, manager of the Gunter, today intimated what the show folk might look for on that day, and in passing, let it be said that it is going to be an all day grind for those thousand or more men, women and children who are "hibernating" here, awaiting the call of the blue birds in the spring time.

Old Santa Claus himself is going to give the festive occasion the right sort of start. He is due to reach the

The Five Graces was the No. 1 bandwagon on the Forepaugh show in 1887. It carried the George Gandweiler big show band.

hotel about 8 o'clock in the morning, and from that hour until noon he will be on the box at the huge Christmas tree, calling the names of all the show people in town that day. Despite the daily collections for war charities and meatless and wheatless days, there is going to be a gift for all of the entertainers and the orphans of the city are going to have their bit as well.

As in former years much of the afternoon is going to be given over to the open-air circus on the lot in the rear of the hotel. Much of the talent will come from the army. In the three or four great army camps here, there probably are among the 60,000 men, 300 from the white tops, the vaudeville realms and the narrower field of the legitimate, to say nothing of those who are seen now and then in the pictures. Many of these have volunteered to do their bit in the entertainment at which the audience will, for the greater part, take on a professional hue.

The big dinner will start at 6 o'clock and at this time the speakers will be chosen from among the representative businessmen of the city. The showmen will also be given an opportunity to tell stories of the good and the bad spots of the past season.

At night there is to be the grand ball, a new feature which Mr. Tyrrell is introducing this year. The splendid ballroom of the hotel will be turned over to the show folk for this, and they will largely arrange their own program.

**December 29, 1917**

The question that we have all been asked many times in the last few days was, "What did you get for Christmas?" I don't think there is any class of people who look after their friends on Christmas more zealously than the circus people. They do not give more expensive presents, but as a rule they never forget their friends and always remember them on Christmas day with something. Many of the presents always come hundreds of miles to reach their recipients.

As for me and mine, the one person who never forgets us is the widow of Adam Forepaugh, the great showman. Her home is in Atlantic City, New Jersey, right on the seashore. In addition to the presents she sent, my wife received one of the nicest letters I have ever read. She said she could look out of her window almost any time and see a half dozen or twenty soldiers passing by, and as for her doing her bit for Uncle Sam, all she could do was to give money; and lo, they seemed to come in relays—just as soon as one went out, another came in. We can help them by giving money, but by giving all the money we can afford, and even more, we are not doing as much as the poor boys in the trenches who are fighting to protect our homes. If everyone was as loyal as this good woman, it would certainly help to lift the burden of others.

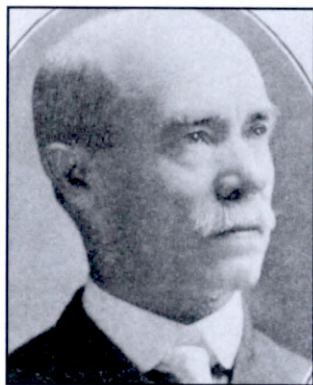
Charles Andress

Another highly prized Christmas card came from my friend, Edward P. Norwood of Baraboo, who for many years has been press agent of the Ringling show. It is a card about six by ten inches with a picture of the winter quarters of the Ringling show. In the picture are some old worn-out cages covered with snow which reminds one there is nothing doing at the winter quarters except in the steam heated buildings. It brought the following greetings: "Ringling Bros. Greatest Show, Baraboo, Wisconsin. To my friend, Dave Watt: Wishing you a Marvelously Merry and Mammothly Mastodon Christmas and



Edward P. Norwood, Ringling press agent.

a Stupendously Happy and Gigantically joyous New Year." Now, did you ever read anything like this? I have to admit that it is beyond me. I know that its meaning is of the best for it comes from the heart of a well-wishing friend. Perhaps when I have been in the newspaper business as long as Ed has, I may be able to digest it. When you receive tokens of this kind on Christmas day, they certainly



bring good cheer with them and remind you that the friends you made long ago have not forgotten you. Another old friend, Charles Andress of Chicago, sent his greetings to the boys and right here I want to say that Charles was a close friend of Buffalo Bill. The last winter that Buffalo Bill spent on his ranch Charles Andress was his guest through the winter. The greeting that he sent to all his friends was as follows: "To one and all my friends in the amusement profession, as well as out of it—a Merry Christmas. I will be thinking of you Christmas day and wish you happiness and prosperity. The day after Christmas I shall continue to wish you happiness and so on clear through the year. I may not be able to

tell you about it every day, but it makes no difference. The thought and wish are there just the same, and whenever joy and happiness comes to you, it will make me truly glad. And to my world of friends, far and near, let me tell you how I am to spend my holidays this year. For the first time in my life, I shall mingle with the truly rural, away out in Kansas on the farm, where innocence and simplicity rule supreme, where the sleigh bells jingle and the long bob sled is filled with straw and a jolly crowd of young and old gather at the different farm houses to enjoy an evening of innocent and unalloyed pleasure; where pleasure games of long ago will be re-enacted; where the children speak their pieces; where music and dancing prevail until about midnight, when all are seated around a big, long table and enjoy a repast which would make Delmonico's look like 'half-past Friday' big, thick custard pies, country sausage and all kinds of cake and pie, made by mother; where there is a spirit of Yuletide such as is unknown to the city folks and where there are rabbit hunting parties of farmers, with some of the Great Bend city chaps joining in. It is predicted that not less than a carload of these 'big jacks' will be delivered to the Red Cross, which is making an earnest solicitation for them. So you, Sport Herrmans and Fred Bradnas, come right out there and if I don't take care of you 'RIGHT' then never have any faith in 'Uncle Charley.' And don't you think for a moment that we 'Kansuns' are not capable of entertaining or that we are the backwoodsmen of long ago. You will be surprised to know that the farmer of Kansas is about the most independent fellow you ever ran up against, for instead of the old log house and the old fireplace, you will find up-to-date modern houses, with every city convenience. Also, statistics show that the Kansas farmer has more money per capita than the farmer of any other state in the union and that Kansas raises more wheat than any other three states in the union combined. I might go on for an hour telling you of the good things in Kansas, but now I must, on account of space, say adieu."

United States Senator Joe

Cannon, who lives in Danville, Illinois, is said to never miss a circus, but goes afternoon and evening for the reason that he takes in one-half in the afternoon and the other half in the evening. The last time Buffalo Bill visited Danville he, with Uncle Joe as his guest, rode in a carriage ahead of the parade. As the Danville people have always been proud of Uncle Joe, the cheers that went up along the route of the parade were deafening. Uncle Joe dearly loves a circus, especially one with a large monkey, a baboon or an ape. In this connection he spins a yarn.

When a boy down in North Carolina, Cannon and a cornfield Negro went to a circus together. Upon entering the sideshow they were attracted by a large ape. It was an enormous brute, the largest, Uncle Joe says, he has ever seen in his eighty-two years of existence. The Negro was so fascinated that he refused to budge from the cage. Long after all the other people had passed into the main tent, the Negro was stalled in the sideshow. Finally, satisfied that none but Cannon was about, he approached the bars.

"How be you?" he asked the ape.

No answer. The Negro looked around again to make certain that he was not observed by strange eyes.

"How is it?" he again asked.

Still no answer, and a third time he spoke to the ape without receiving a reply. Then he burst out:

"Dat's right. Don't say a single word. If you does, dey'll have you out o dat nice straw and a hoe in yow hands in a minute."

As this turns the last leaf in the Side Lights of 1917. I wish you Happy and Prosperous New Year.

#### January 5, 1918

It was along in the early 70's that the owners of the great Van Amburgh show conceived the idea of running a great moral show. At that time two men by the names of Jerry Ferguson and Hyatt Frost were the owners and managers of the show. It was advertised all over the country as a great moral show, without any circus performances or sideshows.

A half dozen or more attractions were repeated each day. The ministers of the different churches thought

the circus part of a big show demoralizing, and they would always receive complimentary tickets to this great moral attraction for themselves and families and perhaps a half dozen or more deacons. There were no seats in this great menagerie, but the tent was a mammoth one, and all the people could do was to stand around and look at the animals until they got tired out.

The average citizen did not approve of this great moral show, for the majority wanted to see a circus with great athletes, lady riders with their short, fluffy skirts—one foot pointing to 6 and the other to 12. They also wanted to see an old-fashioned side show with freaks and big



Rhoda Royal

snakes. So it was that the moral show did not meet the approval of the average citizen. It was a financial failure and the next season the managers of the great moral show were glad to go back and give the people a real circus with leaping, tumbling, clowns, big snakes and freaks of the sideshows. The next fall when the great show closed its season with many dollars to the good, it was proven to the managers that the public wants more than a look at the big elephants and the cages of animals. From that time on the circus and menagerie combination has grown steadily as one great show. The great Barnum and Ringling shows carry more animals and performers than all the shows in the United States carried in the early 70's.

Sampson, one of Ringling Bros. famous old elephants died Thursday at the winter quarters. He had been ailing for several months and failed rapidly the past two weeks. The old fellow was 80 years old and had been with the show for the past twenty years and was known as the "elephant with the paralyzed trunk." The body will be buried on the Rooney farm Sunday. The passing of the elephant is like losing an old friend who has taken an active part in the show business. No one can tell how many millions of children have admired this awkward old friend of humanity.

At sight of the first heavy snow storm this winter the old elephants in the parks in the big cities took great delight in throwing the snow over their backs and blowing it in every direction with their trunks. A manager of a show in Central Park, New York, attached one of the big elephants to a snow plow. A fellow handled it with ease and for several hours seemed to take great pleasure in drawing the heavy plow and clearing paths for hundreds of people, many of whom lived near the park. While elephants come from a warm climate, this old fellow, in clearing away the snow, did not seem to be bothered in the least by the cold. The show managers declared that this elephant would be made to keep the paths clear of snow in the future.

George Castle, a great showman, died on Sunday last at his home in Miami, Florida. For many years the firm name "Cole & Castle" has been familiar to the public. His partner, Ed Cole, died at his home in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, a few years ago. Mr. Castle was well known by many Janesville people, he being a regular attendant here of the harness horse races and was here with his string of horses at the fair held in August. Mr. Castle was in the harness horse game for pleasure and until the last year had done all his own driving. It was back in the 70's that Ed Cole, George Middleton, E. J. Leamon of the famous Fair store in Chicago and George Castle were connected with the privileges of the old Adam Forepaugh show at different times.

The Toyland and Christmas circus given at the Coliseum, Chicago, two

weeks ago proved so successful a circus that it was extended for several days. Almost the entire show was furnished by Rhoda Royal, the famous trainer of "high school" horses. John Agee, who for many years has been a director with the great Ringling show, and Fred Collier of this city, furnished and directed the greater part of the entertainment. The following announcement was made: "The wealth of entertainment offered patrons of Toyland now being held at the Coliseum has proven so attractive in drawing crowds that Manager Thomas P. Convey has announced an extension of time beyond December 24, the original date set for closing the venture and concessionaires and public alike are correspondingly happy. The giant Santa Claus, Major Fred Bennett, is constantly surrounded by a swarm of little ones who pass in line up the stairs to receive a whisper and whisper what they want him to bring them on Christmas day. The Rhoda Royal circus pleased young and old alike and is the big feature attraction. It is a complete one-ring circus staged on a raised platform in the south end of the Coliseum. As all the animals are housed in the annex, this arrangement admits immediate access to the wing without going through the crowds in the main building. John Agee presides as manager and director and it is unnecessary to say that under this leadership the acts work with clock-like precision and a snap and dash that would be a credit to the biggest circus on the road. The acts include some of the best in the show business, among which are

The Sells-Floto Circus winter quarters in Denver, Colorado.

Peggy Austin who, tastefully attired in white, rides a white charger into the ring and sings Joan of Arc. Then follows goats, birds and monkeys, dogs and ponies, a pony drill, Rhoda Royal's 'high school' horse, bucking mule, Roman standing race, clowns, elephants, a pony act, polar bears and the Spirit of Liberty. Altogether it is one of the best and most interesting circuses ever seen and the crowds show their appreciation of each and every act. Mort Westcott has the distinction of placing the first ride in the Coliseum, and his giant Ferris wheel is so pleasing to the kiddies that it is difficult to accommodate all who apply for rides, the wheel being filled to capacity all the time. Throughout the evening Albert C. Sweet's band provides stirring music. In the center of the big building is a ring and a big crowd of children, and some grown-ups as well, having fun galore riding the elephants, donkeys and ponies. All the animals were provided by Rhoda Royal, who has several elephants and eighteen horses working either in the center of the ring or the circus proper. The big building is crowded to capacity nightly, and all the concessions are doing nicely. It is estimated that the State Council of Defense will realize a good sum from the proceeds.

Absolute knowledge have I none,

But my aunt's washerwoman's sister's son

Heard a policeman on his beat

Say to a laborer in the street

That he had a letter just last week

Written in the finest Greek

From a Chinese coolie in Timbuctoo

Who said the niggers in Cuba knew

Of a colored man in a Texas town

Who got it straight from a circus clown

That a man in Klondike heard the news

From a gang of South American Jews

About somebody in Borneo

Who heard a man who claimed to know

Of a swell society female rake

Whose mother-in-law will undertake

To prove that her seventh husband's sister's niece

Has stated in a printed piece

That she has a son who has a friend

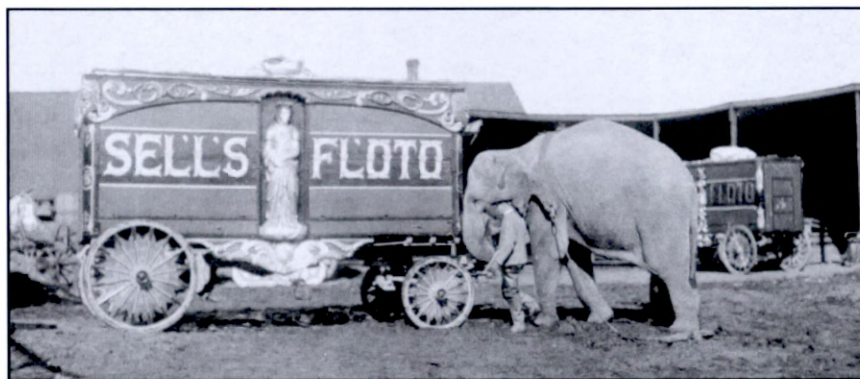
Who knows when the war is going to end."

### January 12, 1918

Since the close of the shows last fall, many people have been asking, "Will the big circus be able to get transportation to go on the road next season the same as heretofore?" While I don't claim to be an authority on this question, it is indeed certain that if it was all work and no play, or all sorrow and no joy, then it would indeed be a sad world to live in. The tent manufacturers took time long ago to buy many thousands of yards of canvas, so they have been able to furnish tents of all kinds for the shows the coming season. As the big railroad shows have their own rolling stock, all they have to ask of the railroads is engines and crews to take them from one town to another. I look for the shows to move the coming season the same as heretofore.

In the winter quarters of the big shows they are busy remodeling for the coming year. It is safe to say that in less than ninety days the great Ringling circus will be given exhibitions in the Coliseum, Chicago, and the Barnum & Bailey show in Madison Square Garden, New York.

We are promised that the new show will be launched for the first time early this season and although nothing in comparison in magnitude to the Ringling or Barnum show, it will be the highest class show ever put on the road for its size. Its owner and manager is an old-time friend of mine with whom I trouped for several years with the old Adam Forepaugh show when I was young



and he a mere boy. I take pleasure in giving you the details of a letter which was given out to the *Billboard* last week.

"Rhoda Royal closed a deal with H. H. Tammen whereby the title of Buffalo Bill's Wild West was leased for a year. Mr. Tammen had been figuring to sublet the title to other interests, but Rhoda Royal made so flattering a proposition that it was immediately accepted. A new show was again created which will be known as 'Buffalo Bill's Original Wild West.' It is to be a twenty-four car show and in addition to the wild west features will embrace the spectacle entitled 'Revels in Hindooland.' The latter conception is original with Mr. Royal and will be interpolated with many astounding and sensational features. Ed C. Warner, former general agent of the Sells-Floto show, was engaged by Mr. Royal and will have charge of the advance of the new show. Mr. Royal left for Chicago tonight to commence outfitting his show and promises he will present the greatest and most interesting wild west performance since the days of Cody, Salisbury and Bailey. Headquarters for the new show will be at the Grand Pacific Hotel, Chicago. The price Mr. Royal paid of the use of the title was not made public."

If one had asked any of the employees at the Sells-Floto winter quarters what was the first thing they wished for on Christmas day, it would have been very easily answered in "Give us a turkey dinner with the good trimmings and we'll be satisfied," said General Manager Henry B. Gentry, always mindful of the inner wants of man and who gave the boys just what they wanted. A few days before the anniversary of "Glad Tidings and Great Joy" he instructed John Mack to look after the purchasing of everything that would make a real feast for the men. And leave it to Mack; he knows how to do things up brown. Here's the menu:

Cream of Celery Soup  
Roast Young Turkey  
Baked Sweet Potatoes  
Mince Pie  
Ice Cream  
Bread  
Cake  
Cranberry Sauce  
Mixed Nuts  
Coffee  
Cigars

And just as the boys were in the midst of these good eats, in dropped Mr. Gentry and H. H. Tammen, who extended to them happy greetings of the day, and the diners in response gave three cheers for the genial H. H. and Mr. G., voting them the very best of good fellows. The boys who enjoyed the Christmas treat of John Mack: John Eberle, general superintendent of winter quarters; Henry Boucher, animal trainer; William Lord, harness man; Leonard Ellsworth, superintendent of wardrobe; George Fowler, assistant boss canvasman; John Sweeney, night watchman; Ben Wallace, George Shiler, Frank Lee, Frank Johnson, Will Anderson, blacksmith; Charles Jackson and Williams Sells. Of course they could not lose George Stumpf, Nobby Clark

nor Eddie Deck. Edward Brown, who is the chef at quarters, and a real one, too; Henry Bell, George Bell and Jimmie Dirks had charge of the serving. Twas a real feed for these circus people and they enjoyed it to the fullest extent.

A visit was recently made to the three location of the Sells-Floto winter

quarters and everything was found in splendid shape. The ring stock is being wintered at Overland Park, where George Stumpf and Nobby Clark are busy each day. There are also scores of draft horses and several other animals wintered here, such as camels, buffaloes, sacred cows, etc. and all were found to be in prime

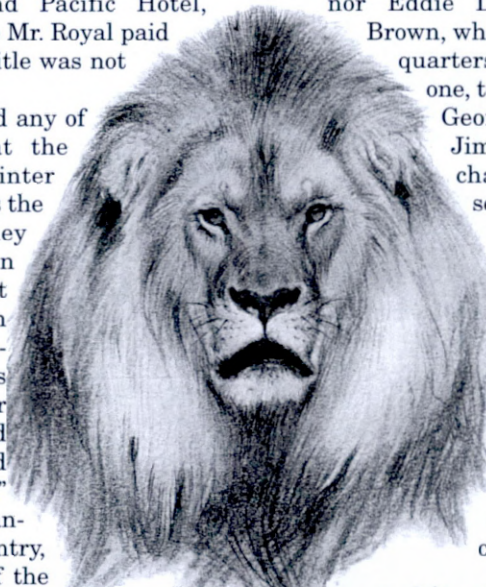
condition. A trip was made to the barns at Sixth and Larimer Streets where the ponies are stabled. They are being given training by William Wells. The elephants and cage animals are at the old winter quarters with Henry Boucher in charge and Boucher is authority for the statement that there will be several additions to the quarters ere long, as the stork is headed for the jungleland department.

The will of my friend, the late George Castle, has been filed in the Cook County probate court. Mr. Castle died recently at his winter home in Miami, Florida. He spent more than forty years of his life in the show business, the early part of which was in the circus line. He was a veteran Chicago theatrical manager. Mr. Castle left an estate of approximately \$1,000,000. It consists mostly of stock in the Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation, U.S. Steel, U.S. Rubber and National Biscuit Company. The bulk of the state is bequeathed to the widow, Mrs. Clara Castle, 1326 North State Street, and his daughter, Mrs. Jessie Castle-Roberts of Detroit. The will also names as a beneficiary A. L. Jacobs, stage manager of the Majestic Theater and associate of Mr. Castle for many years. Mr. Jacobs is bequeathed 100 shares of National Biscuit stock and 250 shares of Union Carbide and Carbon stock. The will also directs that \$50 a month be paid Mr. Castle's mother, Mrs. Cornelia Castle. Mr. Castle had been ill for some time. He predicted he would not return to Chicago alive. His conviction that death was near was evidenced by his executing his will December 7, twenty-two days before his death.

#### January 19, 1918

C. N. Thompson, one of the best known showmen in America, died at his home on Friday night of heart trouble. He was sixty-one years old.

Mr. Thompson was born December 15, 1856 at Marseilles, Illinois, where he attended the public school. He became identified with outdoor shows at an early period in his life and remained in that profession continuously until the time of his death only two months after the close of the season of 1917, which he finished



with Ringling Brothers circus at Memphis, Tennessee, November 5, apparently in the best Jhelh.

Mr. Thompson had been identified with the following circuses as claim agent, adjuster, or on the business staff: S. H. Barrett, Doris & Robbins, W. W. Cole, Adam Forepaugh, Sells Bros., Forepaugh Sells Bros, Ben Wallace, Hagenbeck, Pawnee Bill, Buffalo Bill and Ringling Brothers. His longest period of service was with the Sells Brothers shows as assistant manager and later as general manager, having had charge of the concern on its well-known trip to Australia, the first big American circus to cross the ocean.

At the termination of the season in November, Mr. Thompson returned to his home at Sarasota. He enjoyed his homecoming in his usual happy manner and especially the fishing in Sarasota Bay, spending much of his time the first four days after his return in this manner. On the fifth day after his arrival he was taken suddenly ill and gradually failed until the end which came on Friday night, January 4.

Mr. Thompson was unquestionably one of the most popular showmen the outdoor world ever knew. Though his earnings were great, he was of that type which finds utmost satisfaction in succoring to the needs of others and it was a byword of the arena that "Charley Thompson never turned anyone away."

He was a charter member of the Showmen's League of America, evincing an unwavering interest in the organization from the time of its inception. He was an Elk, a Shriner and a 32nd degree Mason.

He is survived by his wife, a son, Russell, who is in the navy, a daughter, Mrs. Afton Shinn and a brother. He was married at Morris, Illinois, in 1884.

Interment was at Sarasota today under the auspices of the various Masonic orders of the city.

During Mr. Thompson's long career in the business, but few people possibly have been closer to him than I. It was back in the early 80's with the old Adam Forepaugh show that Charlie Thompson and I became fast friends and although I drifted away from the business years ago, we have kept in touch with each other all

these years. It was about in 1904 that Charlie Thompson associated himself with the Hagenbeck circus and built up the first Hagenbeck show in this country and the following season was its manager. It was along during that summer that the Hagenbeck show first exhibited in Janesville, being located on what was first known as the old Burr Robbins farm. It was there that I spent a day with him, and as Charlie Thompson was the manager, he was always the first on the lot in the morning and the last one away at night, for he never left the show grounds until the last wagon had been put away. This was the time that I bade my friend goodnight.

My next long visit with Charlie was a year ago last summer when the Ringling show exhibited in Janesville. After the afternoon show, I was Charlie's guest at dinner and afterward we found a secluded place in the shade near the main entrance where for more than two hours we visited over the old days.

It was along near time for the evening show to open when two young men appeared, neither of them possibly more than twenty years of age and the older one said, "We are looking for a man by the name of Mr. Thompson."

Charlie said, "Well, that's my name, what can I do for you?" The older one being the spokesman said: "This morning one of your big wagons was going from the grounds when they turned a short corner and one of the long poles turned around and struck the top of my automobile and we think you ought to pay for it." "Well, young man," said Thompson, "we will agree on that; any damage that we do today we should pay for and are willing to." After being shown the machine and the damage that had been done, Mr. Thompson asked how much they thought that he ought to pay. They told him that they would be perfectly satisfied with \$5.00 as they thought that it would be plenty to repair the damage and Mr. Thompson immediately handed him his money and took a receipt and the young men thanked him, saying that this was a quick and

satisfactory settlement. It was settlements like this that made the service of Mr. Thompson valuable and always in demand by the best shows in the country. He was a quiet, unassuming man and one who never forgot old friends that he made in his early career in the business. It is said of him that he adjusted more claims satisfactorily both to the shows that he represented and to the public, than any other man in the business. The reason for this was that Charlie Thompson was never unreasonable and in each case of damage states he was always ready to go 50-50 rather than to have any trouble. Everything was always settled satisfactorily before he left the town. Charlie was always a high salaried man, yet it was always said of him that he would go deeper into his pocket to help the needy than any salaried man running a show, and no business man in the country, either in the circus business or out of it, has ever left a better name than Charlie Thompson.

Mrs. Al Ringling has returned from Lexington, Kentucky for a short stay in Baraboo before proceeding to Iowa to see a sister who is ill.

Mrs. Ringling, who is having a house built near Lexington, states that the weather became so cold this winter for that southern locality that building operations had to be suspended. The thermometer got as low as five degrees below zero, the coldest day any of the older inhabitants could remember. Mrs. Ringling left Lexington last Thursday, but did not reach Baraboo until Monday night, being caught in the storm that delayed all traffic. At Richmond, Indiana, the train on which Mrs. Ringling was riding was snowbound for more than forty-eight hours.

#### January 26, 1918

During my visit a year ago last summer with my friend, the late C. N. Thompson, he asked me how I happened to go into the show business and didn't I think my first year in the circus business the hardest of all. I told him a way, I did, for during



the early part of my first season the work was hard I hardly knew how to take hold of it and when to let go. This was in 1878, the Burr Robbins show and early in the season we started for what was suppose to be, at that time, the "far west," which meant Kansas and Nebraska and many times fifty miles or more away from a railroad. While the drives were long the towns small, business was big and we were the first circus to enter that country. Not only the general public, but also the landlords and villagers were all glad to greet us and sorry to see us go. Almost invariably the landlord was the only protector for the entire show, housing the people and stabling horses, and as a rule, furnishing what little billboard we had, and hay and corn for the stock. Many of the hotels were small, not having more than twenty rooms, and as we had fifty people whom we had to find room for at the hotel it was not an easy matter. Many times the rooms in the hotels were given over entirely to the women with the show and the men had to sleep in the barn where the landlord had furnished plenty of straw and blankets, which made it quite comfortable. This was not the only problem for the landlord. He knew all people for miles around and as soon as the show had been advertised, the farmers that he knew the best and had been buying supplies from him, all came in with chickens, butter and eggs, for they were all getting ready money for circus day.

I recollect well an incident with one landlord in a Kansas town. He said to me one morning. "Mr. Watt, I am going to ask you a favor and one that possibly do you some good and no harm, and it is this. If you can advance \$50 this morning, I will guarantee to loan it to good fellows who want to take their families to the show but haven't the ready money." This I was glad to and told him he could have \$100 just as well as not, but he thanked me saying, "Fifty dollars will be enough to loan now, and while I will get it all back in time, it will be some time before some of them can pay it." It was not more than two or three hours later that he called me to one side and said, "Mr. Watt, I have loaned every dollar of

your money, and if it will not inconvenience you any you may give me \$25 more."

In those days and especially in the frontier towns, it made no difference whether our breakfast was at 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning. We could rest assured that there would be plenty of ham and eggs and fried chicken and the best that they could possibly give us. Some of those people had lived there six or seven years and this was the first circus that had been in that section.



Al G. Fields, the minstrel man.

The men in that country worked almost day and night and yet we always received a warm welcome when we arrived in town. When we were leaving hundreds of people would tell us they hoped we could come again in the very near future. The business in those days had a bright side to it, a part of which I have never seen since. All this I rehearsed to my friend Thompson when he had told me that he had never had much experience with the wagon show and always had sympathy for people in the business who had to travel that way. All the landlords of the small hotels in the frontier towns at that time would always give us everything that was good to eat that was possible for them to get at their limited markets. Many a time later than that with the railroad show and in towns many times the size of those new ones in the west, the hotels were not nearly so good. The meals many times would

be very bad and I can recollect very well one hotel down east which was a very large building and we were served one of the worst dinners that I ever sat down to. The head-waiter in the dining room was very busy running around to see if everything was satisfactory. When he came to me and asked me if everything was satisfactory, I told him that everything was cold, but the ice water, and after that I had to send one of the men to settle the bill because this put me in bad with the landlord. Probably this was the first time he was ever told that his hotel was not quite as good as the Blackstone or the LaSalle.

I am very much interested in the following article which appeared in the *Billboard* of last week as several of these men mentioned I have trouped with more than thirty-five years ago.

"There is room at the top, boys.

"David Belasco's (dean of the New York dramatic producers) first real experience in the show business was under the white tops. He ran away from home with a circus as a mere kid and became a bareback rider. The show went to South America. He stuck, but became sick in Chile and his father went there and brought him back home to San Francisco.

"He is at the very head and front of the dramatic profession and he reads the *Billboard* to this day--not all of it, of course, but parts of it are clipped and placed on his desk and among these are always the circus news.

"E. F. Albee, the benign autocrat of the vaudeville world, whose hand can be as firm as a balled fist or as gentle as a woman's, was once a privilege man operating a glass stand in a sideshow and afterward a side show man.

"Samuel Scribner was a privilege man, ticket seller, ringmaster, agent and finally one of the proprietors of a circus.

"Al G. Field, the minstrel magnate, used to be a clown in the Sells Bros. and Wallace shows.

"J. D. Williams, manager of the First National Motion Picture Circuit (and one time the Motion Picture King of Australia) started in the carnival business.

"Yes, boys, there's room at the top.

"If you will cut out the booze, live a

clean, abstemious life, attend strictly to business, prove yourself reliable and trustworthy, you, too, may get there.

"Anyhow it is worth trying for, because even though you do not reach the pinnacle, there are lots of positions high up on the slopes that are well worth striving for."

May Wirth, that clever little equestrienne of the sawdust arena, is at last realizing her ambition. That ambition was to play the big Hippodrome in New York. She begins a lengthy engagement there this week, having been engaged by Charles B. Dillingham to appear in the play called "Cheer Up." In fact, the contract calls for the appearance of the entire Wirth family in a new scenic production entitled "The Circus Modern."

The following sad ending of an old performer who has practically spent all his life in the business was sent me from Worcester last week, and while I never traveled with Gine, I have known of him in the business for many years.

"Stranded in Worcester for almost a week, penniless and with little hope of obtaining work, Prof. Alejo Gine, 61 years old, a native of Chile, South America, former star of P. T. Barnum, and at one time noted vaudeville juggler, came to station one yesterday afternoon and asked to be booked as a vagrant.

"Prof. Gine will appear before judge Samuel Utley in central district court today, and unless he shows he can obtain work in Worcester, he will be sent to the state farm.

"Motion pictures and new stunts by younger men now in vaudeville



May Wirth

are blamed for Prof. Gine's present position in life. He has been a performer in circuses and theaters since he was seven years old, when he was sold by his father to an actor doing tumbling stunts on the South American state.

"Prof. Gine now realizes that he has made a mistake by not saving when he was getting real money for his work.

"Prof. Gine claims to have the most remarkable memory of any man alive. He claims that he can remember back to the day when he was six months old. He claims he was able to swim when two years old without having had any previous instruction. He says he owes this to the fact that he was born in a canoe. He said his father was a sailor and that he was born while his mother was being taken from the ship to land in a canoe.

"His first experience as a swimmer came at the age of two years. He said his mother would tie him to the side of the house while she worked in the yard. He always played at the end of the long rope until one day he managed to get loose.

"In the yard was a large tub of rain water, and Prof. Gine claims he climbed into the tub and as his mother didn't notice him for more than half an hour, and that he is alive today, proves that he must have been able to swim at that period of his life.

"Prof. Gine traveled with the Chilean tumbler until he was about fifteen years old, when he came to New York. He then got a position as tumbler with Barnum's circus. From tumbling he went to juggling and then to bareback riding. He received \$25 a day for two performances for his work and he spent the money as fast as he earned it.

"But younger blood entered the profession, and Prof. Gine then drifted into the side show business, doing a contortion act. For this work he received \$6 a week and board and room for 14 performances a day."

**Plan to attend the**  
**2005 Circus Historical Society Convention**  
**In Baltimore, Maryland June 3-6**

